ADAM LINK IN BUSINESS by EANDO BINDER

VOLUME 14
NUMBER 1

See BACK COVER

AMAZING STORIES

JANUARY • 20c

SONS OF THE DELUGE

by NELSON S. BOND

Six GREAT STORIES
Ten BIG FEATURES

AMAZING STORIES

JANUARY 1940

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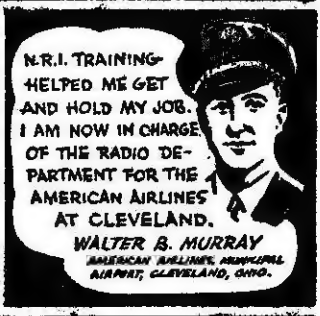
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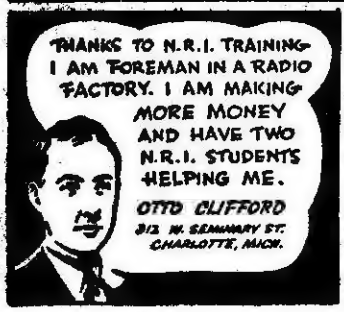
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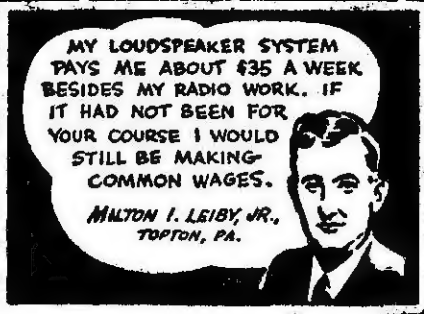
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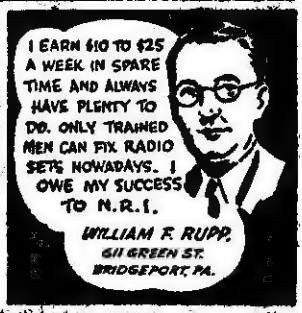
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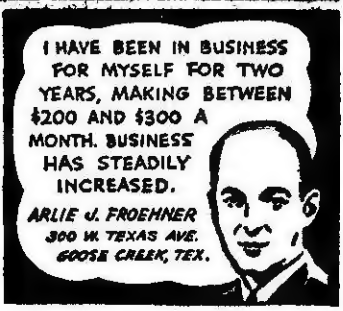
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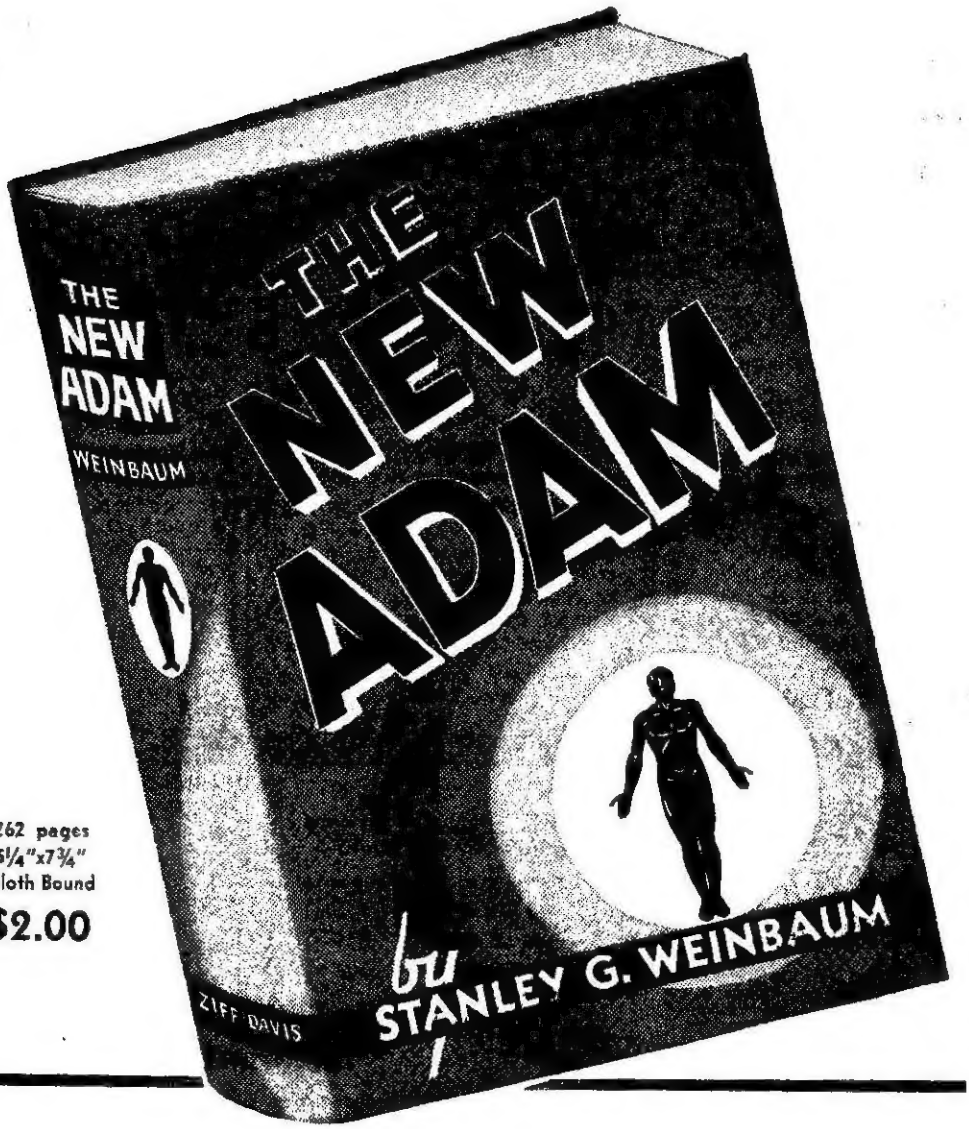

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JANUARY
1940

AMAZING STORIES

VOLUME 14
NUMBER 1

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Front cover painting by Robert Fuqua depicting a scene from **"Sons of the Deluge"**
Back cover painting by Paul Maxwell
Illustrations by Robert Fuqua, Julian S. Krupa, C. L. Hartman

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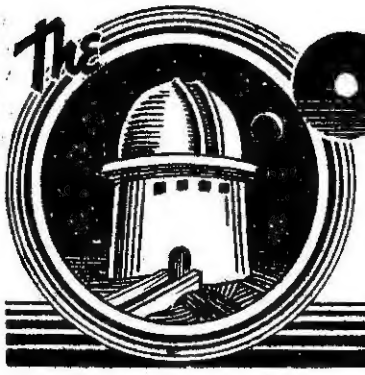
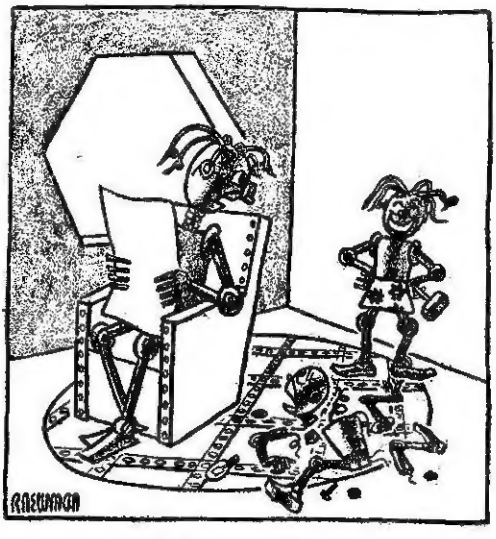
Volume XIV
Number 1



The OBSERVATORY by THE Editor

YOUR editor feels in a grand humor as he writes this, because you've definitely stated you liked our new policy of including a serial in AMAZING STORIES. Ralph Milne Farley's "Hidden Universe," with which we started off the policy, received the highest rating in percentage, in the Monthly Merit Award, since David V. Reed got 81% with his "Where Is Roger Davis?" Farley also got 81%. And by the votes, the second part of the serial is also leading and there'll be no doubt as to its popularity, and its deserving the prize. Now, this month, we give you the second of our serials, this one by Nelson S. Bond, called "Sons of the Deluge." Here's a yarn that we feel will be long remembered by the readers as a "classic." Perhaps we can already say that Farley's serial meets that mark, and we feel proud that we have another of such merit to follow it.

INCIDENTALLY, we are starting off a new year with this issue, and just as 1939 began so auspiciously with the first of the Adam Link series, "I, Robot," we present the third of the most popular "character" stories ever to appear in AMAZING STORIES, to begin the 1940 season. And in this one, the amazing robot takes his place in the business world, but soon finds himself involved in something he finds himself unable to solve with his usual facility. The robot—paradoxically—discovers the man in himself, and finds out that human hearts are sometimes ruled by the brain, and therein he discovers a new kinship with man. What happens when he engages a lovely secretary to help him in his business will grip your interest to the last sentence.



"Be careful, daughter. How many times must I tell you not to play so rough?"

WHILE we are talking of stories, we want to point out that in this issue we are giving you two new authors who promise to put a lot of "hook" on the ball from now on. First, there's a youngster by the name of Carl Selwyn who authors his first yarn, "The Strange Death of Richard Sefton." If you don't feel the cold chills running up and down your back as you read this mystical science fiction yarn, we'll eat icicles all winter! We predict that this writer will cop many a prize in the future.

THE other man we predict needs watching, is Craig Ellis. New to pulp fiction, but *not* new to writing, since he's a "slick" man enticed into AMAZING's fold, he's turned out a yarn that has a terrific punch. We don't intend any pun, although you'll note this is a fight story, because the story has just that—*punch*. The science is extremely logical and convincing. It is reminiscent of Repp's popular "Gland Superman," but it is vastly different, and we know you'll enjoy it.

HAVE you noticed the cover on this issue? It is Robert Fuqua's conception of a scene in Nelson S. Bond's "Sons of the Deluge," and we feel that the artist has captured the atmosphere of the story in an admirable manner. We'd like to hear from our readers about the covers we are giving you now, since we've been giving special effort to producing covers that will make AMAZING STORIES a standout in that regard. We already know how you feel about the popular back covers.

(*Continued on page* 97)

Sons of the

By NELSON S. BOND

12,000 years into the past Duke Callion and Joey Cox sped, in a desperate attempt to save the civilization of Aztlan from the Deluge.

CHAPTER I
The Man in the Cantina

HE was a tall man; tall and distinctly fair, though long exposure to the blazing suns of Mexico had tanned him a deep, coppery bronze. But his hair was wheat-yellow and the tiny hairs on the backs of his hands a sun-bleached silver.

His eyes were pale, sea-faded blue, sunk in cavernous pits beneath high ridged cheekbones; shaded by twisting brows. His nose was a thin-bridged arch that jutted from a forehead tall and sloping as that of any antique marble. He looked like some old Egyptian deity, wakened and newly come from the Valley of the Kings. Aquiline. Proud.

All in all, he was not the sort of person you would expect to find brooding; sipping cheap, thin ale in the back room of an odorous native *cantina*. "Duke" Callion, noticing him, nudged his companion. The gesture was unnecessary, for Joey Cox was already staring at the man.

This story is not pure fantasy. All references to places, persons and happenings have a basis in fact or legend. No one can say that this story did happen. But for that matter, no one can say that it did NOT happen. All I say is that—it MIGHT have happened!—Nelson S. Bond.

Now he murmured his perplexity.

"B-b-beats me, Duke. American?"

"I don't know," said Duke. "Maybe. We'll see."

Fat Pedro, proprietor of the establishment, stared at the two wayfarers. He said curiously:

"You have come far, *senores?*"

Duke replied, shortly, "Far enough." He motioned the barkeep to draw two glasses of beer, nodded toward the mysterious stranger. *"Americano?"*

Fat Pedro's small eyes rolled. He knife-edged the foam off two sweating steins; placed them before Duke and Joey. He leaned far over the counter to whisper hoarsely:

"El es loco, senores. Muy loco!"

Duke grinned. A lean, reckless, lopsided grin.

"That makes three of us," he said. "Come on—let's go meet him, Joey."

He started toward the man's table. With a speed astonishing in his gourd-like frame, Fat Pedro reached out to

Deluge

Behind me I heard an agonized scream as one of my less fortunate followers tumbled into a hole that had no bottom

clutch his arm. The barkeep's face was frightened.

"Por favor, senor!" he pleaded. "Go not near him. It will but cause *molestia*. Trouble!"

Duke shook his arm free. "Trouble in Chunhubub, eh?" he laughed. "Well, why not?" And he continued moving toward the stranger, Joey at his heels. A little bit more trouble, Duke reasoned, could hardly make any difference. They were already in it up to their necks.

Soldiers-of-fortune, he and Joey had just quitted the service of rebel Generalissimo Hernandez Lopez for the very best of reasons. Because neither Generalissimo Lopez nor his troops existed any longer. A surprise attack by the Federals at Tehuantepec had decimated the rag-tag war machine of Lopez. Lopez himself had been courteously but firmly shot before the white-washed courtyard wall of the District jail.

There signal honor had been paid him when no less a dignitary than the Governor of the District himself had rolled and placed between his lips a cigarette. Unhappily, Generalissimo Lopez had not enjoyed the favor. A volley of polite, but adequate, gunfire had expelled life from his body even as his lips expelled their first blue streamer of smoke.

Following which, Duke and Joey had found themselves friendless in the heart of a country which has little love for stray—and defeated—rebels. By foot, horseback and mule, they had beaten a path 'cross-country to Yucatan. It was, they knew, useless to attempt an escape from a large port, such as Vera Cruz. But with a little luck, and with the aid of the few remaining *pesos* in their money belts, it was possible they might find a way of leaving the country through one of the smaller Peninsula ports.

No native, they knew, could resist the lure of the posters offering "Ps. 2000" for the apprehension of either, dead or alive. But if they could manage to find a friendly American or Englishman—. And here, in this sleepy little *cantina*, was a man who might be persuaded to their cause.

So ran Duke Callion's thoughts as he moved across the room toward the stranger's table, conscious of the odd hush that had fallen over the room; conscious, too, of the scarcely veiled hatred in the native's eyes fastened on his back, and of the fact that behind him, Fat Pedro had taken time from his interminable bar-wiping to cross himself in a gesture at once indignant and—fearful. . . .

SURPRISINGLY, the white stranger did not seem to resent the approach of the two Americans. His shaggy eyebrows lifted as they drew near; then he rose to greet them with utterly unexpected courtesy. His voice was deep and smooth as cat's fur. And he spoke —in English!

"Welcome, my friends. You do me a great honor."

"The honor is ours, sir," Duke corrected gravely. "Forgive our intrusion, but I judged we three were fellow strangers in a foreign land, and—"

There was no way of anticipating the man's swift reaction. The hawklike lines of his face hardened instantaneously. His pale eyes seemed to flicker in their jetty depths. His voice was suddenly harsh; imperious.

"Foreign land, sir? There are no such. *All* lands are those of the sons of Aztlan!"

Then, as Duke and Joey stared at him in shocked bewilderment, he relaxed. The corded muscles on the backs of his hands softened. The strange light died in his eyes. He said, slowly:

"Your pardon, please. Sometimes I

forget. And— and all things are not as they once were. . . ."

It was an apology; yet it was not an apology. One of Caesar's proud *centuriones,* addressing a subject barbarian, might have used that same haughty tone. Duke glanced at Joey. Joey's hand gestured significantly, and his lips framed the word, "Nuts!"

Duke stifled a grin, and sat down. Crazy or not, the man might be able to help them. He said cordially:

"My name is Callion, sir. Dave Callion. Or more often—Duke. And this is my friend, Joey Cox."

The stranger nodded quietly.

"I am Quelchal," he said gravely. "Quelchal, of the—" He paused in midsentence; his eyes resting on his empty stein. He looked up sharply, his voice rasping to the barkeep, "Empty! By Bel, dog of an innkeeper, must I give you the lash to get service here! More beer! And quickly!"

Duke stirred restlessly. Angry faces were looking up from all about the room. Evidently this was not the first time Quelchal had created a commotion. And evidently the man was far from popular with the glowering natives.

Fat Pedro waddled from behind the bar. Beads of perspiration streaked his greasy forehead. His mouth was sulky. He leaned over the table.

"Senores," he muttered, "I ask you to leave—now! This disturbance I do not like. *Por favor!"*

The tall stranger rose. He said scornfully:

"You ask us to go, eh? That is well. We cannot talk in this sty, anyway. Come, my friends, let us go before this seller of cheap swill expires of fright and our bellies retch with the stench of this putrid stuff!" He put a hand into his pocket. Metal danced on the table. "For the beer, *olla gordo!"*

Resentful or not the "fat pot" was a tradesman. He glared at the coin; mouthed complainingly:

"For the hundredth time, *senor,* not that money. I have no use for it. *Mexicano,* yes! *Americano,* yes! But *that* —"

"Pig! Eater of pigs!" Quelchal retrieved the bit of metal; thrust it back into his pocket. "If you will not have this, take nothing! I go! Come, my friends!"

He stalked toward the door. Fat Pedro's face darkened. He spat something in his native tongue; so swift that even the two soldiers-of-fortune could not catch it. There was a sudden movement in the *cantina.* A figure brushed by Duke; slipped toward the disappearing Quelchal. Something caught the glint of sunlight, shimmering evilly.

It was instinct—sheer instinct—on Duke's part. He left his feet in a swooping dive. His arms locked about the knees of Quelchal's attacker; welded a band of steel there. Metal clattered on the floorboards. The man whom Duke had tackled grunted once, heavily, and lay still.

Suddenly the place was in an uproar. As Duke rose to his feet, something whisked by his head to dig into the wall beyond and cling there, vibrating a melody of death. Joey's excited voice shrilled, "D-d-duke! B-beat it!"

Quelchal had turned in the doorway. He hesitated now; moved as though to come back. Before he could do so, Duke and Joey hurtled toward him; slammed him backward into the street.

Angry figures spilled after them like bees buzzing from a broken hive. Duke's hand streaked to his hip. His gun coughed bluntly. A leaden messenger splatted on the lintel above the heads of their pursuers. Its challenge froze the natives in their tracks. For an instant. Then they were scrambling for the security of the *cantina.*

Voices screamed vile epithets. That of Fat Pedro was loudest of all as the barkeep clamored for his *argento*. Duke dug a few coppers from his pocket; tossed them toward the now vacant doorway. He shouted warningly, "Get that, fat one, *after* we've gone!"

Behind him, Joey said mournfully:

"Trouble. Nothing but trouble. I wish I was home in Cincinnati!"

Quelchal stood quiet and aloof; as calm and unmoved as though nothing had happened. His mood was meditative.

"Eaters of entrails! I shall have them burned in tallow. Better yet, they shall be buried in scorpions—"

Duke, his automatic still covering the doorway, rapped impatiently:

"Yeah! But meanwhile, they'll be getting up nerve to come out after us. What do we do now?"

Quelchal was silent for a moment. Then:

"We will go to my place," he said quietly. "It will be safe there."

CHAPTER II

He From Aztlan

THERE was nothing queer about Quelchal's "place"— from the outside. It was a typical Mexican 'dobe hut, entering from the main street of the little Yucatan town by means of a narrow, shaded *arceo* which widened at its far end into a court.

A solitary frayed, despondent palm made an oasis of shade in the center of the court. The hut itself had but one doorway, and only two tiny, paneless windows; mere niches in the baked clay. But its walls were thick, and inside there was welcome relief from the interminable downpouring of the tropic sunlight. As they entered, Duke heaved a deep sigh of relief. He did not need Quelchal's urging to toss himself on a cool mat of reeds.

Joey Cox was nervous. Like Duke, he had divested himself of his heavy gunbelt, but unlike his friend, he did not relax in the grateful coolness. He padded about the dim room restlessly, peering into shadows as though suspicious of lurking dangers.

"D-d-duke—I don't like it!"

Duke Callion grinned. It was his temperament to take things as they came. Fight, fun or frolic—they were all much the same to the reckless young Irish-American. He grinned at his stuttering companion lazily.

"Don't like what? Those greasers at the *cantina?*"

"N-n-not them. I don't mind them so much. B-b-but this Quelchal, or whatever his name is. I think we ought to pull out of here. The guy's nuts!"

Duke nodded amiably. "All right. So he's nuts—then what?"

"Then let's blow."

Duke stretched luxuriously.

"And leave this coolness? Not on your life. I'm going to stay right here—until tonight, anyway. Anyhow," he straightened and looked at his companion significantly, "Quelchal's a white man. He may be able to help us get to the coast. Get a boat out of the country."

Joey said stubbornly, "W-w-we've made out all right by ourselves before. We don't n-n-need help from—"

"Duck it!" Duke clipped succinctly. Quelchal was entering the room. He bore on a wickerwork tray a carafé, three glasses, and a small vial of liquid. He approached the two friends and nodded with more than customary geniality.

"I see you are relaxing, my friends. That is well. Soon you will be completely rested."

He poured water into each of the

three glasses; then, with precise fingers, added to each glass a few drops from the tiny bottle. Joey glanced at Duke; then back at Quelchal suspiciously.

"What's that stuff?" he demanded.

Quelchal smiled. "Drink, my friend, and learn."

Joey squinted at his glass dubiously. "I'm not drinking anything," he said, "until I know what it is. For all I know —"

Duke drawled, "Don't be a sap, Joey!" and took his glass. He lifted it toward Quelchal briefly. "Good luck!" he said—and swallowed.

Swallowed—then stared. Whatever Quelchal had put into the water from his little vial, *did* something! There was no change in the taste of the water. But the effect—

It was as refreshing as a cold plunge on a hot day. As stimulating as the keen bite of alcohol to tired muscles. Of a sudden, Duke's weariness and exhaustion were gone, and his body seemed to have found new life, new vigor, from some unsuspected well of strength. He felt awake. Alive.

"Sa-a-ay!" He looked at Quelchal in amazement.

The tall stranger smiled again; that slow, grave smile that Duke could not help but like.

"We call it," he said, *"ambrosia."*

Duke repeated enthusiastically, "Ambrosia! That's a good name for it. It's like the stuff the gods used to drink in Olympia. That stuff—"

A STRANGE sadness swept the smile from Quelchal's face. He said, in a far-away tone:

"Olympia—no! Or, maybe yes. There were some of the barbarians who called it that."

Joey Cox had followed Duke's example. Now shining eyes and a subtle lifting of his shoulders indicated that he, too, had felt the magic of the potion. He said:

"O-o-olympia? B-b-barbarians? Hey, what's it all about? W-w-what are you guys saying?"

Quelchal's eyes met Duke's searchingly. His voice was strangely pleading. He said:

"Callion . . . Duke Callion . . . I think you are beginning to understand. Aren't you?"

There was a curious sensation of lightness, eeriness too bewildering for comprehension, tugging at the fringes of Duke's intelligence. Memories half-forgotten through years of adventurous living were coming back to him slowly; tantalizing him with a thought too absurd to be true. Quelchal's words reached beyond the frontals of his mind; stirred some latent spark of imagination. He said, hesitantly:

"Quelchal—there *is* a thought in my mind. But it is so wild . . . so fantastic . . ."

"Not wild. Not fantastic." Quelchal beckoned the two Americans to his side; stepped with swift, sure strides to a far, dim corner of the room. Even in that half light, his eyes seemed to glow feverishly. His hand made an impatient gesture toward a wall rack on which stood a number of small objects. "Look!" he said. "These—have you ever beheld anything of their kind?"

That the things were *old*— incredibly old—Duke knew instantly. And that they were not born of any civilization known and understood by modern man, he knew, too. A ring was there; a ring of strangely greenish metal which in the faint light shimmered weirdly. There were coins . . . coins of no nation recorded in history. Coins surmounted with odd hieroglyphics; embossed with the effigy of a monstrous snake entwined about a stark and leafless tree. There was a smooth metallic cylinder there,

graven with indecipherable figures.

Quelchal's long, bronzed fingers swept a metal tablet from the shelf. He placed it into Duke's hands. Once again, as in the *cantina,* his voice was oddly harsh and commanding.

"This symbol, Duke Callion—you have seen it somewhere before? It means anything to you?"

Duke stared—and memory flooded back suddenly. He was a boy again, delving into a strange fantastic book from his father's library. A book which reported to tell of an ancient civilization built around a—a crooked mountain. Of an ancient race, fabulously potent, fabulously wise.

His lips groped for half remembered words. He said:

"Cosmos, the Mad Monk! The crooked mountain. The mountain of Cal . . . of Calhua. . . ."

Quelchal almost ripped the tablet from Duke's hands. He raised it high over his head, eyes gleaming and thunder rolled in the chanting of his voice.

"Calhuacan!" he cried. "At last—one who *knows!* Aye, Duke Callion, it *is* the Mount of Atlantis. And *I*—"

Despite himself, Duke felt dread expectation rolling over and through him in great, omnipotent waves. Suddenly he knew what Quelchal's next words must be. But he framed the question.

"And you—?" he asked.

There was the clarion call of trumpets in the voice of the golden stranger. Pride, too. Hauteur . . . and victory. And glory.

"And I, my friend," he said, "I—*am an Atlantean!*"

CHAPTER III

The Years Between

IT was Joey Cox who broke the silence. Stammering Joey Cox, whose awed tone proved that even *his* complacent pragmatism had been shaken by Quelchal's proud pronouncement. He said, in a hushed but querulous tone,

"A-a-atlantean? What does he mean, Duke? W-what's an Atlantean?"

There was a dreamlike quality to Duke Callion's answer. The words seemed to spring from some deep well of his consciousness; some forgotten corner of his memory.

"It was centuries ago," he said slowly, as though he repeated an almost lost knowledge. "Plato said it was nine thousand years before *his* time. That would make it twelve thousand years from today.

"There was a land—an island—opposite the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea. A large island which was the remnant of an Atlantic continent. It was known to the ancient world as—Atlantis.

"It was here that man first rose from barbarism to civilization. These were the Elysian Fields, Olympus, the Gardens of the Hesperides, Asgard, Valhalla. The gods and goddesses of later civilizations were actually but memories—race memories—of the ancient kings and queens of this island. The acts attributed to the gods in our mythology are but a confused recollection of real historical events."

Joey said confusedly, "B-b-but how is it I n-never heard of this place before? There's n-n-no island at the m-m-mouth of the Mediterranean Sea, Duke."

"No. Not now. Because it sank. Sank beneath the sea, in a gigantic catastrophe, with more than sixty million inhabitants. The sea opened and swallowed Atlantis—or so the legend tells—in a terrible convulsion of nature. In a single day and night."

Duke stopped suddenly. He had been repeating his fragments of knowledge

concerning Atlantis more to reawaken his own memories than for Joey's benefit. Now his own words roused him to the incredibility of Quelchal's claim.

"But, Quelchal, I don't understand. You said that you were an Atlantean. The descendant of Atlanteans—that is what you meant?"

"Not a descendant, Duke Callion." Quelchal's tone was infinitely grave. "I am one of those who really *lived* in the shadow of Calhuacan aforetime."

Duke stared. The man was mad. *Must* be mad—or the rest of the world was! But Quelchal was speaking.

"I have waited long," he said, "for one in whom I could confide. A man who might understand. My friends, if you will be seated, I would like to tell you a story. . ."

IT was a new colony (Quelchal began) and one which our mariners had but lately discovered. It lay far to the westward of the homeland. It was a land of warm, blazing sunshine; of minerals, oils and vast forest resources. Its name, in the tongue of the brown-skinned natives, was Yuuktaan. But we called it "Mayapan,"* honoring the goddess and god of fruit and fertility.

I was but a young man then, yet not lacking in experience. I had twice served with our foreign troops; our legions that held the barbarian outside world in fee. Once, indeed, I served under King Theseus himself when he led his expedition against the Gorgyones.** Weird creatures they were with their ebony-hued skins, their brightly painted faces, and their wild, curly locks piled high on their heads in a fashion calculated to touch the bravest heart with stony dread.

In recognition of my services, King Theseus granted me the post of Viceroy to this new colony. I had little desire to leave the homeland, but the proffered honor was a tempting one. Ten summers as Viceroy to Mayàpan, and I knew I could return to Aztlan as an important figure in the royal court. So I accepted.

There was much to be done, I found upon my arrival at Mayapan.

First, the natives must be convinced that our conquest was a benign one. They were a backward race; sullen and suspicious. They had no culture, and less learning. In contrast to us Atlanteans, whose knowledge of the sciences was greater than that which the world enjoys today.

Here Duke Callion interrupted.

"Come now, Quelchal!" he expostulated. "That cannot be so. Our chemists . . . our astronomers . . . to say nothing of our marvelous mechanical civilization . . ."

Quelchal smiled sadly.

"Your chemists, Duke Callion? You have tasted the ambrosia. Could your chemists duplicate it today? And as to mechanical ability—well, we shall speak of that later."

My duties, however, (the Atlantean continued) were not solely of a social or altruistic nature. One important task was the study and development of the natural resources of Mayapan.

Having studied chemistry, geology, kindred subjects during my own youth —yes, Duke Callion, Atlantis had its institutions of higher learning—I did not delegate others to head all of these expeditions, but selected those which seemed most promising for my own per-

* "The Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg calls attention to the fact that Pan was adored in all parts of Mexico and Central America; and at *Panuco* the Spaniards found, upon their entrance into Mexico, superb temples and images of Pan. The names of both Pan and Maya enter extensively into the Maya vocabulary . . . (as in) . . . the name of the ancient capital, Mayapan."—Introduction to Landa's "Relacion."

** The "Gorgons," whose enemies were turned to stone by gazing upon them?

sonal study. It was this which was responsible for my being here today.

Word was brought to me by certain of my engineers that in a mountain not far from the capital city of Mayapan a wealthy mother-lode of gold had been discovered. Hearing this, I made arrangements to supervise the mining personally. I temporarily transferred my headquarters to a mining camp at the base of this mountain.

I will not bore you with the details of our mining operations. Suffice it to say that they were highly successful. The gold was there, as my geologists had claimed. It was, apparently, retrievable in great quantities.

Only one factor made the operation hazardous. The fact that this mountain was volcanic. From its highest peak there constantly fluttered a plume of white haze; while ever and again our miners were terrified to find the earth ashake beneath their feet in undulating temblors.

It was following one such shock—more severe than most—that my chief engineer came to me suggesting that we abandon our position as untenable.

"It is but a matter of time, Excellency," he told me, "before a major 'quake occurs. A temblor which may not only destroy all of our work, but take the lives of many of our workers."

I was reluctant to adopt his suggestion. Gold was the standard of exchange in Aztlan of old, as throughout most of the world today. I had already received many very pleasing communications from King Theseus regarding the shipments we had been sending home from our colony. So I hesitated.

"Our stopes," I said. "Our shafts and stalls are sound, are they not?"

The engineer shrugged. His gesture indicated the puniness of any man-made path through the bowels of Mother Earth when she begins to tremble.

"Very well, then," I told him. "I will make a trip into our farthermost shaft myself. If, in my opinion, there is danger, we will abandon the mine."

"Yourself, Excellency?" The man looked fearful.

"Of course."

"And—how soon?"

"Tomorrow. Or better yet—tonight. Darkness and light have little meaning in the heart of a mine."

He sought to dissuade me. Begged me not to go into the mine. But I should have been a poor leader of my colonists had I not been willing to undertake what he called the "perilous journey" to the working face of the mine. I was determined to go; perhaps even eager. I dismissed his wild predictions as fantasy.

Would to Bel I had been less proud; what happened next?

QUELCHAL paused. There was a moment's silence and then the sound of Joey Cox drawing a deep breath.

"W-w-well?" he prompted, "w-w-what happened next?"

"The end of the world," Quelchal replied sombrely. "Or, at least, the end of *my* world . . ."

It was at the entrance to the fourth stope (the Atlantean continued) that we first began to feel the temblors. For more than two hours we had been in the mine, carefully studying each working face, trying to determine once and for all the workability of the mine.

Suddenly, as we were approaching the last and most distant face there came a dull rumbling sound that rocked and echoed in our ears like the beating of massive drums. The ground beneath our feet began to shake; slowly at first and with a sort of insistent rhythm, then more and more violently.

A loose rubble of shale and small

rocks began falling from the rough-hewn roof above us, pelting our exposed bodies sharply. There was a curiously sharp odor in the air; a stinging, acid taint that made us cough and sneeze.

For the first time, misgivings struck me. My head engineer *had* been right. The mountain *was* volcanic—and actively so. I gave the only order possible under the circumstances.

"Flee!" I told my companions. "Run for your very lives!"

How can I hope to describe to you those next wild moments? A scant handful of men scrambling through musty corridors that rocked and swayed like the walls of an opium eater's dream world. The bedlam of sound that cascaded on our eardrums from every side! The groaning, crushing sound of nature in travail.

Panic struck my attendants, but I am proud to say that even in those dreadful minutes I was still their overlord and chief. They recognized my authority, and at the risk of their own lives gave way that I might move before them into higher ground and safety.

That was—until the torches went out. But as the gas increased about us, those flickering torches of grease wood spluttered and died, plunging us into Stygian darkness. Then it was truly every man for himself . . . hot hands pressing forward eagerly toward the still-open corridors . . . torn feet stumbling over piles of detritus.

As the last torch expired, I saw one man go down—his head crushed beneath a huge rock that had fallen from the tunnel roof. Once, beneath my feet, I felt the ground slip into a gaping hole. I leaped frantically; managed to find firmer footing. But behind me I heard an agonizing scream as one of my less fortunate followers tumbled into a hole that had no bottom. . . .

It was no longer possible to tell where our original tunnel had been. Our clutching hands found great rips in the walls; shearings as smooth as our own borings. For a while our little party attempted to keep together; locating each other by shouts and cries. But as the hellish cacophony about us deepened in tone, our cries were lost.

How long I fled through those twisting tunnels it is hard to guess. But at last there came that dread moment when my hand, reaching out to find a companion, found no human to touch. When my shouts touched upon no ear. I was alone. Completely alone beneath the crust of a tortured earth that was ripping and tearing itself into shreds. And—I was lost!

Yes, I knew now that I was lost. Somewhere along the way I had taken the wrong turning; run, somehow, into one of those blind passages that had either been hewn by our own workmen or had been carved out of solid rock by the violence of the temblors. Still I continued to run forward; hopelessly, unthinkingly, as a trapped rat will continue to run the corridors of a maze.

But at last there came the moment when my headlong flight plunged me painfully into a solid wall. There was no more open space before me. I tried to retrace my steps, then. I moved backward, carefully, feeling the ground beneath me quivering and trembling like a wounded heart. My hands, wide-stretched, sought an opening—any opening—to gain another furlong . . . another yard . . . another inch. . .

I found—nothing! Behind me a huge segment of solid rock had fallen, blocking completely the path through which I had entered this small corridor. Before me there was no opening. The walls that surrounded me were smooth; sheer. I was trapped!

And with that realization, my resources came to an end. I suddenly

discovered that I was worn and weary; exhausted with my futile scrambling. My lungs and nostrils were thick with the stench of dust and gas. Despairing, I threw myself on the ground. My chest labored. My heart's pumping was like the vast pulsation of a savage drum. But even as I lay there, panting, its tumultuous throbbing died down. I began to feel calmer despite the din about me. I understood, finally, why. . . .

IT was the gas that was seeping into my chamber! Somewhere above me a slide had opened a vent, possibly from the very heart of the volcano. Through this aperture was filtering some strange admixture of noxious gases. These it was that were soothing my troubled mind; lulling me into a sense of false security.

I knew, then—or guessed—that this was to be my doom. To die alone and unattended at the bottom of this mine.

Yet—it was a better death than I had hoped for a few minutes before. It was, at least, a painless death. I made a brief prayer to the gods, feeling the soft fingers of drowsiness fog my mind as I mumbled the final words.

The ground beneath me felt somehow softer. Now my breathing was a slow and measured thing. Curiously, I felt the tiny pulse in my wrist. It was beating—but oh, it was slow! Infinitely slow. It was getting slower as my tired fingers fell away from my wrist.

No longer did the thick gases choke me. A feeling of utter abnegation suffused me! expunged all cares from my mind. My body seemed to float, suspended in thick, creamy softness. My eyelids were weighted. They closed of their own accord. I was tired . . . tired . . . .and content. Death, I remember thinking, was not an unpleasant companion.

Sleep came upon me like a sable cloud. Beneath me the tortured earth groaned and twisted . . . rocked and swayed with the rhythm of a gigantic cradle. . . .

CHAPTER IV

Escape

QUELCHAL paused, and smiled. So engrossed had Duke Callion been in the strange man's story that the smile seemed somehow eerie. As though it had been framed by the lips of a spirit.

Joey Cox must have felt it, too. He said,

"B-b-but, Quelchal — y-y-you escaped?"

Quelchal nodded slowly. His voice was melodious.

"Yes, my friend. I escaped. . . ."

My first thought upon awakening (he said) was that I had but dozed under the influence of the lethal gases in my emprisoning chamber. How long, I did not know. Perhaps a few minutes—or even a few hours.

This belief was strengthened by the fact that the ground beneath me still shook and trembled. I say "still." I should say "again"—but I did not know that then.

At any rate, I woke to discover that the air was free of the heavy gases which had caused my drowsiness. I first sensed the unusual when I scrambled to my feet. As I did so, I found my body to be strangely weak and stiff.

This I might have logically attributed to strain, had it not been for another even more terrifying and inexplicable thing. As I rose, dust, inches thick, fell from my body, causing me to sneeze and beat at the cloud which rose around me. And in doing so, I learned that I did not have a single stitch of clothing on my back!

Something tinkled on the rock beneath my feet. I bent over and fumbled

for it in the darkness. It was the metal shoulder buckle with which my toga was secured. My feet were bare; my entire body the same.

There was but one logical conclusion to draw from this. Human agency. There must be someone beside myself in these depths; some thieving rascal whose base instincts had overcome even the fear of the eruption, causing him to strip me of my fine silk and linen raiment as I lay senseless.

I called. There was no answer. The cavern echoed the sound of my voice.

Enraged, I started to grope my way toward the near wall. One fact appeared certain to me. Where a thief found entrance, an honest man could find exit. And, in truth, I *did* find an opening which led into a tunnel which, in turn, led upward into a jumbled rock-covered path to the surface.

All this time, you comprehend, about me the tunnel walls and floor were trembling as before. The sound of tumbling rock, the grinding tumula of volcanic activity was in my ears constantly. But I scarcely noticed the din. I was fired with eagerness to escape from my underground prison; grateful to the gods who had seen fit to preserve me from the fate of my companions.

My heart was sore within me for those whom I had left in the dark vaults beneath. Yet I, myself, presented a sorry spectacle. My feet, shredded and bleeding from the sharp rubble through which I had picked my way, my bruised and dirty body, my face, grimy and coarse with stubble. In a short time, though, I promised myself as a I neared the narrowed mouth of the tunnel and saw sunlight again, I would be laved and shorn, shod again, comforted with soothing pastes and unguents.

EXPECTANTLY, I staggered the final few rods; leaned at last against the shoulder of rock that concealed the tunnel mouth, and called weakly for help. By now, I knew, the entire population of the city would be out searching for us.

But—there was no answer. Save from the depths below me a dull rumbling as the mountain groaned in its labor, and from the sky above a high, thin screaming as some curious bird wheeled low to stare at this naked, bleating scarecrow.

Vainly I called again—and yet again. There was no reply. Now, for the first time, a feeling strangely akin to fear seized me. I looked at my surroundings sharply. They were the same . . . yet they were somehow different. I recognized the general outlines of the mountains that hemmed me in, the position of the sun in the sky (near high noon, I judged it) the undulant plateau land below me and to my right . . .

I had not, then, come out on the wrong side of the mountain. I had emerged from a passage that faced toward the capital city, Mayapan. As a matter of fact, all I had to do to view the city was walk a few yards forward. From that slight, cupped rise the staunch buildings and gleaming towers of my colonial seat would be visible.

Drawing a last ounce of strength from my incredibly weary body, I dragged myself forward those last few necessary steps. I mounted the rise; raised my eyes to look once more on Mayapan.

But—Mayapan was not there! I looked down upon a vast, parched, homeless plain, scorching beneath the rays of a torrid, merciless sun . . .

Quelchal paused. His great eyes rested sombrely on Duke Callion. He said,

"You understand, Duke Callion, what it was I looked down upon?"

Duke nodded. He answered, "It was

—today. Wasn't it?"

"You are right. It was today. The present. I who had gone into the bowels of the mount in the second year of Kan, had emerged twelve thousand years later—in that which you moderns call the Twentieth Century!"

JOE COX said, surprisingly, "There was an eruption of Teolixican five years ago. In 1935. Was that—?"

Quelchal nodded.

"That was it, my friend. Do not ask me how these mysteries came to be. The gods have their own reasons for doing such things. I have pondered long on this which befell me, but have reached no decision. All I know is that through some strange chemistry I, Quelchal, Vice-Regent of the Atlantean colony on Mayapan, was put to sleep by gases in a subterranean chamber twelve thousand years ago, to awaken in *your* time.

"I will not bore you with the tale of my difficulties in this strange new world of yours. How I staggered in to this shabby little village of Chunhubub, naked and weak, to find myself at once feared and hated by natives to whom I could not even speak.

"It was the Indians who, in the end, befriended me. To them I could at least make myself understood. Certain lingual similarities existed between their crude tongue and my native language.* They looked upon me as a sort of white god; nursed me back to health.

"From them I learned something of the history of the world through which I had slept for twelve thousand long years. From them I learned also a smattering of the Spanish tongue; enough that later I could establish relationship with the Mexican folk and live amongst them in peace and equity.

"For this came to pass after I had recovered a part of my strength and had revisited the mine. There I found a few handfuls of gold—enough to purchase the things with which to satisfy my needs and start working on that which I considered necessary . . ."

"Necessary?" said Duke wonderingly.

Quelchal's eyes gleamed. There was a heightened color in his cheeks.

"But of a certainty, Duke Callion! Think! Of all the things I learned upon my escape from the depths, what one do you consider would grieve me most?"

Duke said uncertainly,

"The—the vast changes that had taken place in our world since your long sleep? The sinking of Atlantis and the fate of your people?"

"That is it!" There was a hungry yearning in Quelchal's voice. "Duke Callion—it was more than a year after my escape that I even found one who knew what I meant when I spoke of my homeland, Aztlan. Then it was an old priest, a learned man, who thought I was crazed when I told him of my adventure.

"Yet it was from his lips that I learned that which is today considered a legend—the tale of the catastrophe which swallowed Aztlan beneath the waves. Of the utter destruction of our former fine civilization. Of the state of barbarianism to which the outer world descended, the loss of our mechanistic civilization, our learning, our science, our culture . . .

"I have already hinted to you, Duke Callion, of our science. You have doubted me. But—come! You shall judge for yourself!"

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* The language of the present day Quiches baffles science. Dr. LePlongeon who spent four years exploring Yucatan says, "One-third of this tongue is pure Greek! Who brought the dialect of Homer to America? Or who took to Greece that of the Mayas? Greek is the offspring of the Sanskrit. Is Maya? Or are they coeval? . . . The Maya is not devoid of words from the Assyrian."

WITH a quick, herding gesture he motioned the young soldiers-of-fortune to follow him. He led them from the tiny room to another even smaller one adjoining it. In one corner of this room rested a strange object of gleaming metal. It was spherical in shape, its welded smoothness marked on one side by the tight-fitting outline of a doorway large enough to admit a man.

Quelchal's fingers pressed a space beside this port. Noiselessly the door swung open, revealing an interior which glittered with strange gadgets and meters, the purpose of which Duke Callion could not even guess. Quelchal stepped in through the port; motioned his friend to follow him.

"There is room for all of us," he said.

Wonderingly, Duke obeyed. Joey, close behind him, said dubiously, "It l-l-looks like a machine of some kind. A v-v-vehicle?"

"That is it precisely," said Quelchal. "A vehicle such as no man has ever seen before. Or—that is what it will be when I have completed it. Which will not be long, now. It lacks but a few minor adjustments to make it a finished product. A few minor changes to assure perfect accuracy . . ."

Duke said, "But what is it, Quelchal? What is its purpose?"

"Can you not guess, Duke Callion? Think again.

"Let your thoughts, your hopes, your dreams be as mine were four long years ago. My homeland gone—vanished beneath the waves of the ocean. The greatest civilization mankind has ever known lost; destroyed in its entirety. The world possessed by savages who lust for war, conquest; burn their resources with reckless abandon.

"Is it not only natural, Duke Callion, that I should dedicate myself to changing these things that be? I have said that our science was great. Here, before you, is proof of my claim. The machine you see is one on which Atlantean science was working at the time I was Vice-Regent of Mayapan. That they did not perfect it before the Deluge is now obvious. I cannot guess why. But I *did* perfect it! And with it—"

Duke cried excitedly,

"It's mad, Quelchal, and I must be mad to even think of it. But everything is mad today. Do you mean to tell me that this machine—"

"I knew I had found one who could understand, Duke Callion. Yes, it is what you think. A machine in which we three can return to Aztlan the Eld, as it was aforetime, to warn my countrymen of their impending fate. And thereby alter the entire course of subsequent history. It is—a time machine!"

CHAPTER V

The Time Machine

DUKE said, "A time machine!" and his face mirrored his chaotic emotions. But it was practical little Joey Cox who pounced upon Quelchal's most significant statement.

"W-w-we *three?*"

Quelchal said, "But, naturally, we three!" There was a quiet simplicity in his voice; a tone which intimated he offered a privilege, an honor, which no sane man could refuse. He looked faintly puzzled. "Can it be that it is not your desire to accompany me?"

Joey said hastily, "N-n-not me, thanks! You don't get me in any time-hoppin' buggy. Cincinnati is where I'm headed for!"

"Stow it, Joey!" ordered Duke curtly. To Quelchal he said, slowly, "Quelchal, this *is* sheer madness. A time machine! Oh, I know what you mean all right. I've read a few strange stories

about such contraptions. In science fiction magazines, and things like that. Wells wrote a book about a time machine, I think. But as for there actually *being* such a thing—" He shook his head. "I'm sorry, old boy. It's just too incredible."

The bronzed face of the great golden man turned a shade darker. For a brief instant, lines of hauteur tightened it, as in the *cantina*. His sea-faded eyes burned, and his voice was that of the Vice-Regent of ancient Mayapan.

"It is not yours to question, Duke Callion, when I, Quelchal, tell you—"

Then, suddenly, he seemed to remember himself and his sternness fell away from him like a faded cloak. He reached forward and touched Duke's arm.

"Forgive me. And do not judge too swiftly, Duke Callion. Listen to my explanation. . ."

For a moment he seemed to fall into a reverie, as though wondering how to put into words knowledge that the two young Twentieth Century soldiers-of-fortune would hear for the first time. Then he began speaking.

"Time, Duke Callion. Do you know what it is? Is there any man alive who knows what it is?

"We say it is the 'measurement of duration'—and our words are meaningless. We define Time by one of its own attributes.

"This we do know, however. That Time has strange contradictions. At the same moment in Time, a man in London and a man in New York look at their watches. The hands of one man's watch say it is five o'clock. The other's declare it to be twelve. Yet, though the Time is different—Time is the same. . .

"This is a mere quibble, you will say. A bit of sophistry, based on our Time measurement system. And it is true, the argument is specious.

"But—" Here Quelchal made a great, all-embracing gesture. "—who is to say that in this vast universe of ours, a similar situation does not exist on a macrocosmic scale so staggering as to defy our puny computations? Let us suppose that in this spacious arena of all-Time, the wee intervals which we call 'years' —" Quelchal's voice made the word sound insignificant. "—are but as fractions of seconds in Eternity. Less than that. Say that they are but one of the same piece—as a painted mural is one piece that the eye may scan and view in its entirety in an instant.

"Under these circumstances, would not all those events which mankind classes as 'historical' be occurring at one and the same instant?* A contemporary has pointed out that, viewed from afar, the entire history of mankind would have transpired in less than a year; the history of man's knowledge in less than a week. To this same watcher from afar, might not events which we consider separated by long periods of Time appear to be one and simultaneous; part of the same pattern?

* "To dramatize the recent increase in the rate of scientific progress, let us compress the time scale a millionfold. This means that a year ago the first men learned to use certain odd-shaped sticks and stones as tools and weapons. Speech appeared. Then, only last week, someone developed the art of skillfully shaping stones to meet his needs. Day before yesterday, man was sufficiently an artist to use simplified pictures as symbolic writing.

"Yesterday the alphabet was introduced. Bronze was the metal most used. Yesterday afternoon the Greeks were developing their brilliant art and science. Last midnight Rome fell, hiding for several hours the values of civilized life. Galileo observed his falling bodies at 8:15 this morning. By 10 o'clock the first practical steam engine was being built. At 11, Faraday's law of electromagnetism was developed, which by 11:30 had given us telegraph, electric power, the telephone and incandescent electric light.

"At 11:40 X-rays were discovered by Roentgen, followed quickly by radium and wireless telegraphy. Only 15 minutes ago the automobile came into general use. Air mail has been carried for hardly five minutes. And not until a minute ago have we had world-wide broadcasts by short wave radio."—Arthur H. Compton in *Science* Magazine

"A pattern, Duke Callion! There is your answer! Even as I stand here talking to you, the Visigoths are raping Central Europe. Napoleon is marching confidently on Moscow, a Cro-Magnon man is hunkered over his tiny fire of dung and twigs, a 17th Century pirate is sacking a golden galleon of Spain. Yet these things are not happening *years* apart—they are happening inches apart on the gigantic tapestry we call, for lack of a better term—Time!"

He paused, triumphantly. Joey Cox looked bewildered. Duke Callion fingered one of the shining metal knobs on the panel before him absent-mindedly; then said,

"A clever concept, Quelchal. A damned clever concept, but I am afraid you are guilty of wishful thinking. You want to get back to Aztlan so badly that you have deluded yourself into believing it possible.

"Even your premises, were they right, would never permit the manufacture of a *machine* to pass through Time! Why, good God, man, it's impossible!"

"Impossible!" Quelchal seized on the word with a greater expression of joy than Duke and Joey had seen him manifest previously. "Then, Duke Callion —how do you explain *these!*"

HE jerked open a small drawer in the time machine; tossed before the astonished pair several small objects. A small silver medallion emblazoned with the head of one whom Duke recognized as the Emperor Caligula. A broken arrowhead of crudely chipped flint. Most astounding of all, a sabre-like fang of abnormal proportions.

Quelchal jabbed an excited finger at each in turn.

"From Rome, this first," he cried. "Rome of about 40 A.D. The age of the second we can but guess. Probably around the ten thousandth year before He whom you know as Christ. The other is older yet. It is—but I see that you have guessed, Duke Callion?"

Duke nodded slowly.

"Yes," he said simply. "It is the tooth of the sabre-toothed tiger."

"Right! Well, my doubting friends, *these* objects came out of the past in my time machine on a grapple, when I sent it back, with set controls, to see how far it was progressing toward perfection.

"Thus, you see, my machine will penetrate the past. Or, as I prefer to think of it, it will rise above the Time tapestry and land again on another contemporary instant a short distance away."

"If you are right," demanded Duke, "why haven't you gone back to your time before now? What are you waiting for?"

A slight frown crossed Quelchal's face. He answered, "For a very good reason, Duke Callion. On these trial 'flights' I have also sent along small animals. Cats, rabbits, once a monkey. In each case they have returned to me —dead!

"I think I know why, now. During the past weeks I have been laboring to correct the mechanical fault which is responsible for the inability of animate objects to pass unharmed through the area above Time. Now I *think* I have it. But we must wait and make one more trial before we—"

Quelchal's words ended abruptly. A frown gathered on his face.

"Pardon, my friends!" he said—and stepped out of the machine.

Joey Cox grabbed his friend's coat-sleeve.

"H-h-hey!" he cried. "Let's g-g-get out of here! That guy's gonna send us off in his d-d-damn Time-buggy!"

But Duke's keen ears had caught the same undertone which had sent Quel-

chal hurrying into the other room of the 'dobe shack. Now he, too, was hastening after the man from Aztlan. Joey followed at his heels.

The noise was plainer in the other rooms. It was a dull sound, but an ominous one. The sound of many voices raised in growling anger. Duke had heard it once before in Alabama—at a lynching. He had heard it again in Tripoli when a horde of angry natives had stormed the white trading concession. It was an unforgettable sound, and an ugly one. The sound of a mob, bent on frenzied mob justice.

Swift strides took him to Quelchal's side near a small paneless slit in the baked wall.

"Quelchal!" he rapped. "Is it—us they're after?"

He did not need the Atlantean's answer. For as he watched, a horde of strangely assorted figures burst through the little *arceo* that screened Quelchal's dwelling from the street. Some men there were garbed in the tattered rags of peons. Others, like Fat Pedro, were better dressed. Yet their faces, too, were angry and drawn with mob fury. And in the vanguard of the approaching throng came a dozen men in khaki uniforms, with rifles unslung and ready for swift retributive action.

Joey Cox took one look at these latter, gasped and made a dive for his gunbelt. He tossed Duke's to him. He even forgot to stutter when he cried,

"The Federals! They've found us! Duke, we're in for it now!"

CHAPTER VI

One Chance in a Million

TO Duke and Joey Cox, hardened and used to sudden emergencies in the crucible of war, their next actions were instinctive. They had not even time to feel surprised that Quelchal, too, was reacting so swiftly and with such quick knowledge of that which must be done.

The tall golden man rammed shut the only door, and placed across it a ponderous block of wood thick as three men's arms. While Duke and Joey, with unspoken accord, leaped to the two slit-like apertures, he jerked open a cupboard and — surprisingly — brought forth a rifle of ancient vintage.

There was regret but no alarm in Joey's voice as he called to his friend across the room.

"This l-l-looks like taps, Duke. We'll probably be too busy to talk in a minute, so—so long, guy!"

And the carefree young Irish-American, more soberly than was his wont, answered,

"So long, Joey. I'll be seein' you—somewhere."

"I wish," mourned Joey regretfully, "it was in Cincinnati!"

Then there was no more time for words. The throng had deployed now, as best it could, to scattered angles of the courtyard. From their vantage point, the three victims of the siege could see the hurried consultation amongst the army men. One, evidently *el capitan,* called in Spanish,

"Americanos! Surrender — or be shot!"

Joey muttered, "Yeah! Surrender and we'll be shot anyway!"

Duke grinned across the room at him. He drew a deep breath. "I'll take mine," he said, "straight!"—and his finger tightened on the trigger on his automatic. Still he waited. If a guy was going to go down fighting, he could still be an American and a sportsman. Let the other fellow start the fight . . .

And then the storm broke. Broke as all tempests break, with a single, sharp, explosive crack! A gun spoke,

and something hard *splatted* on the 'dobe above Duke's slit. Another shot . . . and another . . . and from every angle of the courtyard, leaden death began to hail upon the refuge.

Then Duke's automatic and Joey's spoke as a single voice. And where two riflemen had been crouching in the half-shadows, two khaki-clad figures slumped forward, guns and the battle forgotten forever.

The world became filled with the sound of gunfire, the thin, high screaming of bullets as they ricochetted off the 'dobe to waste their lethal selves, the stench of burnt powder. The detachment of Mexican Federals loaded and shot, pumped, reloaded and continued firing in a steady bombardment. Duke and Joey fired less often—but they made their shots tell.

Quelchal waited awkwardly, patiently, in the background. As Duke whirled to him, pointing at an automatic now empty, Quelchal nodded and stepped into the breach. There he raised his ancient firearm, sighted with careful aim and contributed his bit to the defense while Duke hastily jammed fresh cartridges into his still-smoking chambers.

"Nice work, Quelchal!" Duke tossed as he stepped back to the slit. Quelchal nodded; permitted himself a wan smile —then stepped over to hold Joey's portal as Joey's clip ran out.

How many times he loaded and fired, reloaded and fired again, Duke never knew. But at last there came that dreadful moment which, from the first, he knew must eventually come. The moment when, stepping back to let Quelchal take his place at the aperture, he rammed his hand into his ammunition pocket to find—nothing! Or, even more ironically than nothing, two final bullets.

Despairingly, he thrust these into the chambers. As he moved back to his slit he called,

"Joey—any more—"

Then he stopped. For Joey, too, had now stopped firing. The expression on his face as he turned his pocket inside out was more eloquent than any words he might have used.

IT was a pointless question, and Duke knew it even as he asked, "Quelchal —there's no back way? No other way to get out of here?"

Quelchal shook his head. But from the wall he had taken down three *machetes*. Now, silently, he distributed these to the others. It was their last resort—and all of them knew it.

A bullet somehow found its way through the narrow aperture above Duke's head; sang past him and buried itself in the far wall with a *ping!* Duke's eyes narrowed, and he raised his automatic, trained it on the man whose marksmanship had been so accurate. Then—he lowered the gun.

Two shots left! It would be better to save those two for Quelchal and Joey. They'd rather find quick death at the hands of a friend than—that mob outside!

There was a stirring movement from the besiegers now. For several minutes there had been no answering shots from their quarry. They guessed why. Duke could see the Federal captain gesturing his men to him. They were coming toward the house now . . . hesitantly at first, then more and more surely as the empty silence persisted. From scattered parts of the court were rising the enraged peons. Knives, bills, *machetes* in grimy paws, they too joined the macabre finale to the manhunt.

This, Duke Callion knew, would be the end. For a moment he felt a qualm pass through him. To die this way—in a strange land, far from home and those

whom you called your own. To die *thus*—not in the heat of battle, but at the hands of a blood-lusting mob . . .

He shrugged off his misgivings. After all, he had bargained for this. He had been a soldier-of-fortune; ready to gamble at dice with Fate for his life or another's. Now he had lost the toss. A fragment of an old adage danced through his mind. "Those that live by the sword—"

The attackers were at the door now. Pounding with gun butts and eager hands upon its straining portals. With the cessation of gunfire, the tumult of voices was again audible. The besiegers kept up a steady stream of vituperative howling, screaming, shouting. The door groaned complainingly—and a shaft of yellow sunlight split through a hinge-joint to spill on the rough flooring like golden blood.

A *machete* blade split the upper panel; stuck there in the wood, quivering. Quelchal stepped forward calmly; smashed the fragment of steel with his own blade. It fell to the floor. But the door groaned again—and this time there was room for a man's arm to come through. An arm *did* come through—an arm bearing a revolver which leveled at Duke Callion's breast.

But even as a swarthy finger tightened on the trigger, Quelchal stepped forward again. His *machete* made one soft, *snicking* sound. The revolver exploded aimlessly. An insensate hand and forearm tumbled incredibly to the floor; grisly object that broke limply from the revolver. A gout of blood spurted across the sun-stained flooring. Outside a voice raised again . . . and yet again . . . in a terrible scream of agony and pain.

LIKE a flash, Duke scooped up the fallen revolver. It was half empty, but he poured its remaining shots recklessly, ruthlessly, into the close-packed sea of humanity that battered at the door; had the satisfaction of hearing hoarse screams as his leaden messengers of death went home. Then he tossed the useless instrument into the face of a soldier who suddenly loomed before the window-slit. The man's face fell away from the aperture, an angry red hole gaping where once an eye had been . . .

But not forever could the flimsy fort be held.

Already the door was falling from its hinges, and already the wooden bar that held it together was creaking and straining under the pressure from those outside. And now Duke shouted what might be his last order.

"The other room!" he cried. "We can hold 'em for a little while in that narrow doorway. With our *machetes!*"

And it was then, as they raced from the first room to that which was Quelchal's workshop, that Joey Cox cried,

"The t-t-time machine! Quelchal—can't we escape in *that?*"

Quelchal's eyes lighted.

"By Bel!" he roared. "Maybe!" Then his face fell and he shook his head. "No! No, it is not completed. It might mean—death!"

"Death?" roared Duke. "It's sure death for us to stay here, anyway. Do you think there's an outside chance—say one in a million—the damned thing *might* work?"

Quelchal groaned in an agony of indecision.

"It might. It might not. I don't know. The last time I sent it out, it killed the creatures I sent with it. But I have made changes since then. Changes which I hoped would—"

A hoarse shout of triumph drowned his words. From the other room came the sound of wood ripping at last like rotten paper. The trample of feet. The

Quelchal's machete slashed downward with a swift motion, lopping the hand clean off at the wrist

babel of the mob. Duke seized his two companions by the shoulders; whirled, and thrust them toward the metallic sphere.

"Then we'll take that chance in a million!" he decided. "To hell—or to Atlantis! What does it matter? Get going!"

Blindly, the three scrambled into the glistening machine. Quelchal began to press cryptic buttons with a frantic haste. A figure appeared in the doorway. Duke let loose a gleeful roar.

Quelchal's fingers found the final button. Something oddly silver glowed on the instrument panel. A deep hum rose from the entrails of the machine; shrilled into a high, piercing crescendo, and died in the tonic labyrinth of ultrasound.

Joey shouted, "The door, Duke! Shut it—*quick!*"

Duke slammed the portal. The machine seemed alive with a quivering sentience of its own. Duke barely beheld the way the outlines of the room faded and merged; became first shadowy, then a running blur of color as Quelchal's machine throbbed into motion. For stifling pressure bore down upon him . . . pressing . . . pressing . . .

He was conscious of Joey's agonized face staring into his own. Of Quelchal's lips writhing to form a half-sentence. "It's a fail-" Then darkness, sullen, brutal and complete, swooped down upon him.

Behind the three venturers, a vengeance-bent host of Mexicans poured through the doorway of the little room to halt in awed horror. Before their eyes, a huge, silver sphere was shimmering weirdly through the colors, beyond the colors, of the spectrum. An instant it shimmered . . . then faded into a pale ghost . . . then evaporated

into—nothingness! Nothing at all!

A howl, half of disappointed rage, half of superstitious awe, rose in the little hovel in Chunhubub. But Quelchal, Duke and Joey did not hear it. They lay senseless on the floor of a vibrant metal sphere that, untended and unguided, plunged down the dark passageway of Time toward a goal that Mankind no longer even remembered . . .

CHAPTER VII

Mayapan the Eld

A MILLSTONE was on his chest; grinding, crushing, until his shrinking flesh screamed and his very bones were turned to thin gruel. Duke strained, and tried to lift an arm that seemed weighted with lead. It would not move.

But—no! The pressure was less now! He felt an answering response from his fingertips. Now the millstone was lifting from his crushed body. The filmy shadows that had engulfed him were wisping away like scudding storm clouds.

He returned to consciousness with a start. Still breathing heavily, but—Duke struggled to his feet—but still *alive!*

He was in the silvery sphere that Quelchal called his "time ship." Before him, still unconscious on the palpitating floor, were Joey and the man from Aztlan. Duke dropped to one knee. He called, anxiously,

"Joey! Quelchal!"

Joey Cox stirred. He said pettishly,

"Aw, b-b-beat it! It's too early to—" Then he was completely awake again; aware of the strangeness of his surroundings. Swift recollection swept the drowsiness from his eyes. "J-j-jumpin' jeepers, Duke! It worked!"

Duke said, "You mean—it wiggles. We don't know whether it works or not yet. For all we know, we're still in the room. Maybe those greasers are having trouble getting into this crate. It's metal, you know." He rose and moved toward the port. "By golly, I'll soon find out—"

"Wait!" That was Quelchal's deep, melodious voice raised in warning. The Atlantean, too, had now shaken off the gyves of unconsciousness. With eyes feverishly glowing, he was studying the instrument panel. "Wait, Duke Callion! If you value your life, do not open that door! We're still travelling!"

Joey laughed raucously.

"That guy values his life? Hell's bells, if he *did*, do you think we'd be here now?"

And Duke said, curiously, "Travelling, Quelchal?"

The great golden man stumbled to his feet. For a long minute he bent over the instrument panel; then turned to the others.

"Yes. See?"

He pointed to a needle set in a dial. It moved so slowly that at first the eye could not detect its creeping. But as the slow seconds ticked by, the wondering Duke and Joey saw it cross one black dot . . . another . . . and glide inexorably toward the next.

"W-w-what are those dots?" Joey demanded f e a r f u l l y. "W-w-weeks? Months?"

There was the faintest touch of scorn in the tall man's reply. Scorn—yet at the same time, pride.

"Not weeks," he said. "Not months. *Decades!*"

Joey repeated, "D-d-decades!" in a stunned voice. Then he drew his sleeve across his forehead and said, awefully, "Jeepers! If we started at that spot back *there*, I haven't been born yet! Won't be born for a couple thousand years!"

DUKE frowned. He said abruptly, "Yes, Quelchal, how do you explain that? Haven't you created a biological paradox? If you are right—if we are actually travelling backward in Time as you say—how is it possible for Joey and me to exist in a Time that was before our ancestors even lived?"

Quelchal sighed and shook his head. "You must abandon your former concept of Time, my friend. Cease looking upon it as a measure of duration—and see it as a broad tapestry in which all things happen simultaneously. Conceive of this machine as an airship in which we are traveling not from one *time* to another, but from one *place* to another."

Duke pondered a minute. Then, "I see. But if Time is but another dimension of space, Quelchal, there is only one medium through which we can travel. Through that which takes us above the tapestry. Through—the fourth dimension!"

"Precisely right!" Quelchal smiled. "And that is exactly where we are now, Duke Callion."

Joey Cox snorted. "You guys," he declared emphatically, "are nuts! I've got ten bucks says we're still back in Chunhubub, and right outside this here time-travellin' tin can there's a bunch of howlin' greasers waitin' to lift our scalps!"

"Save your money, Joey," smiled Quelchal. "Even though it will be valueless where we are going—" And he moved to one side of the sphere; touched a slide. A portion of the metallic wall slid back in an oiled groove, exposing a clear quartz-glass plate. "See for yourselves!"

The two men pressed their noses to the pane. Duke whistled. Even the dubious Joey paused and scratched his head. It was assuredly not a terrestrial scene that greeted them. It was no scene at all. It was nothing but wan, flickering *grayness*. Grayness through which, intermittently, flickered fantastic streamers of light and dark. Grayness that writhed and twisted.

Joey stammered, "W-w-what's that?"

"That," answered Quelchal, "is the passageway of Time. Days upon endless days. Years upon years. The way to the eternal. And we are the first to see it."

Duke turned away from the pane as Quelchal moved back the metal slide. He said, in a strangely humble tone, "And where is it taking us, Quelchal?"

"To Atlantis—I hope. Or to the Atlantis that was when I was Vice-Regent of Mayapan. To Atlantis, before the Deluge, Duke Callion."

IT was strange, at first, to be in that odd time craft of Quelchal's which, despite its apparent practicability, continued to waver and throb as though it might at any instant fall apart. But after a while the three time vagabonds became accustomed to their unusual surroundings, and with typical human adaptability began to look upon this as a quite commonplace journey.

The Atlantean had overlooked nothing in his construction of the machine. True, the sphere was not sufficiently large to provide sleeping quarters, but there was a tiny sanitary toilet, a tank of drinking water, and a supply of food, mainly of the tinned variety.

"Not any too *much* food," Quelchal admitted. "But enough to take us where we are going. After all, we aren't explorers in Time. Our trip has a definite purpose."

Duke Callion glanced at the dial. In the few hours since they had entered the time machine, the needle had traversed hundreds of small dots. He said, "And how long do you judge it should

take us to reach our destination, Quelchal?"

Quelchal smiled gravely.

"There is a slight element of chance involved there, Duke. It is not my fault, but that of your inept historians who believed Atlantis to have been a myth.

"The only Earthly record I could find of the date of Aztlan's catastrophe was that left by Plato who said in his *Critias* that the Deluge had occurred 9,000 years before the time of his famed ancester, Solon. Solon's era was approximately 596 B.C. We left Chunhubub in 1936 A.D. So, on this somewhat arbitrary basis, it would seem that the Deluge must have occurred *about* 11,535 years before our departure.

"I have set the dials to take us back to my own era, which was approximately 11,600 years ago according to my computations. There we will find a ready ear to our warning. There will be sufficient time for my brethren to abandon the treacherous island; seek the safety of the mainland. And the vast culture of Aztlan will not then be lost to the world."

Duke said, "I hope so, Quelchal. But still I am afraid."

"Afraid? Afraid of what?"

"I can't bring myself to believe that any man, any group of men, can change the history of mankind, once that history has been written on the books of Time. Or, to use your own simile, after it has been painted on the tapestry which is Time.

"Aren't these things done, now and forevermore, Quelchal? Is it not futile to hope we can go back and warn your people of the impending Deluge? Won't the Deluge come in spite of us?"

"Mayhap, Duke Callion. But to carry my concept a bit farther, I conceive of this Time tapestry as being one the twists and turns of which may be varied. At any rate, that is my hope.

"We will arrive in plenty of time to warn Aztlan. Despite the fact that for centuries the Earth has been relentlessly pursuing its way about the Sun; despite the fact that each 360 days have seen another revolution added to the interminable winding of Time—"

Joey burst in curiously,

"T-t-three hundred and sixty, Quelchal?"

Quelchal said patiently, "Why, yes. The number of days in which the Earth makes a revolution about the Sun."

A SUDDEN, inexplicable fang of fear sank deeply into Duke Callion's heart. His voice was grave as he said,

"An error, Quelchal. And perhaps a costly one."

The Atlantean's face darkened.

"An error, Duke Callion?" he repeated stiffly.

"There is one thing at least," pursued Duke sombrely, "in which our moderns were in advance of those of your time. Astronomy. The earth does not, as you believed, revolve about the Sun in 360 days,* Quelchal—but in three hundred and sixty-five days and a fraction!"

Quelchal stared at him for a minute —then shrugged.

"What difference does it make? A few years less; a few years more. When we make our first landing we will ascertain the era in which we have landed. Correct our calculations and make a second voyage. It should not take us long. Look!"

He pointed at the time dial. Already it had gone far from its starting point.

* There is evidence that the later Mayan civilization corrected their first calendars, allowing a space of five intercalary days to round out each year. However, this was not true in Quelchal's era. Early Mayan calendars show an artificial eighteen month year with but twenty days to the month.—Author

Now it was hovering close to a metallic marker Quelchal had set at the start of the time flight.

"Already our first journey is near an end. In a few minutes we will land. Brace yourselves!"

Joey said,

"B-b-brace ourselves? Why?"

"Because in the haste of our departure we had to start from ground level. Ground level varies by many feet over a period of centuries. If we are fortunate, we will land easily. If not, there may be a slight crash."

Quelchal gestured toward a series of hand-grips set into the walls of the time-sphere. Duke and Joey took a firm grasp on a brace of these; planted their feet solidly. Silence fell over the little chamber as the needle groped closer and closer to its mark . . . poised fractionally above it.

Duke said, "All set?" and Joey answered, "L-l-let 'er rip!"

Quelchal's face was wreathed in glory. It shone with a joy transcendent. His mobile lips framed a word. It was scarcely audible above the heightened throbbing from the heart of the machine, but Duke could read the movement. He was saying, "Aztlan!"

The dial needle hesitated, wavered, stopped. For a moment there was a breathless silence—then the machine gave a sudden, violent lurch. Duke's knuckles stood out whitely as he clutched his hand-grip. His feet slipped beneath him precariously.

"Look out!" he shouted. "We're falling!"

The nebulous, shimmering outlines that had bathed the ship throughout the weird backward journey into Time ended suddenly. The silvery sheen faded from the instrument panel. A new sound reached Duke Callion's ears. An eerie, whistling sound. Wind whipping past the dropping sphere. The machine wobbled and swayed beneath them. The muscles of Duke's arms corded with strain.

Then—they struck! With a grinding crash that jolted their feeble grips from the hand-holds; sent each of them crashing floorward. Duke was conscious of a startled shout that ripped from the throat of Joey Cox. The weight of Quelchal's body suddenly jammed against him, loosening his grip on the stanchion, crushing him back. Glass broke and fell, tinkling, about him. Metal groaned in protest. Then something rose beneath him to slash at his head with a fiery bludgeon.

There was a sudden, terrific shock. Pain burst upon him; over him, like a great, toppling wave. The inside of the sphere reeled, spun, collapsed. And from a vast distance, a brazen gong rose and roared, drowning out all else in the tumult of its clamoring . . .

CHAPTER VIII

The Sun-god's Greed

SOMETHING hard prodded Duke Callion. He mumbled in protest; stirred weakly. Every bone and muscle in his body ached with bruise. His head was alive with crimson devils who jabbed at his temples, his eyes, with flaming pitchforks.

He groaned, rolled over, and opened his eyes. A shaft of white-hot sunlight blinded him. He scrubbed at his eyes with the back of one hand and started to stumble to his feet.

Then suddenly, realization flooded back upon him.

He was no longer in the sphere. He was on a flat sandy shelf overlooking a city. And *what* a city! It was not the dingy Chunhubub from which their time-journey had begun. This was a great, sprawling metropolis gleaming in

the sunlight with white, pyramidal temples, broad avenues, and green courts.

Behind him lay the ruins of the time-ship. It no longer was a shining sphere of seamless metal. The crash had split it from top to bottom. From a gaping hole there leaked shards of intricate coils and tubes; oily guts of the ill-fated machine.

But strangest of all were those who stood before him. A dozen brown-skinned natives, eyes wide with wonderment. Two or three feather-bonneted men-at-arms, lances dubiously levelled before them. And, at the head of all, a crimson-robed white man whose sun-bronzed skin, aquiline nose, and haughty, sea-faded eyes reminded Duke curiously of Quelchal.

"Quelchal!" With the thought, Duke's eyes sought his companions. Then he breathed a deep sigh of relief. They were all right—or seemed to be. Like himself, they had been borne from the damaged ship by the native slaves. As he looked, Quelchal stirred and moaned. Joey Cox was also beginning to regain consciousness.

Now, as Duke turned back to face the leader of the strange band, the crimson-robed one spoke. He rapped a series of unintelligible syllables, only from the intonation of which could Duke guess that a question had been asked. Duke shook his head.

"Sorry, buddy," he said, "but I don't get your lingo. Wait till my pal here comes out of it, and—"

The man spoke again; this time an imperious note in his voice. He raised the object with which he had prodded Duke into awareness, brandishing it. It was a short, thick-handled, braided whip bound with metal. There was a tinge of impatience in his tone.

Duke said, "Hey!" in a startled tone. Then, as the man lifted the whip ominously, repeating his question, Duke's quick, Irish temper rose.

"Cut it!" he snapped—and stepped forward.

Affronted, the man made as though to bring down the whip upon Duke's shoulders. But Duke never felt the sting of its lash. In one swift, sure move he whipped out his gun and shot the whip from the crimson-robed one's grasp.

The man snarled; his face mottling with anger. He turned to the armed men behind him; spat a hasty command. They pressed forward, levelling their spears threateningly at Duke.

Duke moved impetuously. He reached out and grasped the crimson-robed leader about the throat; twisted him, and jerked him forward until the man's body covered him as a shield. He gritted, "Now, call off your feather-headed buddies, mister, before something happens."

The man writhed in his grasp, but Duke's arms held him like iron bands. Finally he caught the sense, if not the actual meaning, of the young adventurer's words. Half-stifled, choking, gasping for breath, he coughed a single word. The spearsmen fell back. Duke loosened his hold.

"That's better!" he said approvingly.

Joey's voice came from behind him. "Hey, Duke—w-w-what's goin' on here?"

Duke answered calmly, "Oh, nothing much. This guy in the red nightgown just tried to work out on me. I had to—"

Then Quelchal, recovered at last, came forward to join them. There was a look of joy, mingled with one of apprehension, on his face. He said,

"You have been unwise, Duke Callion. This man is a priest. But all is well. These are my people." And he began to address the crimson-robed one in a swift, mellow tongue unfamiliar to the two Americans.

AT his first words, a look of swift astonishment swept over the face of the stranger. A look of surprise and puzzlement, which rapidly gave place to one of excitement. He rapped queries at Quelchal which the Atlantean answered. Duke and Joey waited expectantly.

Finally Quelchal flung them a few words of explanation.

"Our trip has been successful—or partially so. As you anticipated, we landed in a later time than was our intention. I am not yet sure how much later. But we are in Mayapan the Eld."

Joey said blankly, "M-m-mayapan? That's Yucatan, ain't it? I thought we were going to Atlantis?"

Quelchal smiled. "The time ship cannot alter our geographical position," he said. "It can only carry us back through the years. It is enough that we are here."

He turned back to the leader again. Now he said something, pointing to the city on the plain below them, and the man shook his head. He pointed at Duke and Joey. Quelchal raised his voice a degree—and there was in it a note of command.

The man nodded, but as he did so he shot from his lowered eyes a baleful glance at Duke. Then he barked some words at his followers. Quelchal gestured to his companions as the ill-assorted group started moving away from the time-ship and down toward the city below.

"Come," he said. "I have not quite succeeded in convincing him. But I have aroused his curiosity. We are going to seek an interview with the Vice-Regent."

Joey's eyes were wide with wonder as he stared at the high, vaulted colonnades of the auditorium in which they stood. It was a wide, roofed court; baked limestone walls frescoed with intricate lacework carvings, walls and roof inlaid with arabesques of gold and precious stones, tapestried with sweeping drapes and arrases. He whistled softly.

"Gosh, Duke, get a load of this joint! It looks like the inside of the Fort Knox reserve depot!"

Duke Callion's eyebrows had lifted, too, but for a different reason. Standing betwen Joey and the silent Atlantean, he had been watching the gathering crowd of spectators. Now he had seen something that made the whole screwy trip seem worth while. He said,

"Never mind *that*, Joey! Take a look at the girl in the white robe. Over there in the archway."

Joey looked, grunted approvingly; then continued to stare at the rich adornments of the palace. Duke was less easily satisfied. He stared at the girl with unconcealed admiration in his gaze. Stared until at last she seemed to sense his gaze upon her, looked up and met his unfaltering stare—then flushed and lowered her head.

Duke smiled to himself. Girls were very much the same, he thought, whether in Mayapan the Eld or in America of the Twentieth Century. For even now the girl's head was raising for another stolen glance at this brash, handsome young captive who was so boldly staring at her. The blush, Duke thought, was both becoming and—quite modern!

Then, from some invisible source, came the golden note of trumpets. An expectant hush fell over the throng. An elaborately costumed man-at-arms approached the little trio; gestured to them. A gigantic tapestry fell back from one segment of the corridored court—opening a way into a still larger room adjacent.

The three stepped over the threshold of a court which for sheer luxury sur-

passed anything Duke or Joey had ever dreamed of. A council chamber; surmounted at one end by a raised dais on which there stood a throne of solid gold. On this throne, swaddled in ceremonial robes of indescribable splendor, sat a lean, hawk-faced man who leaned forward curiously to study them as they marched in.

Quelchal whispered swiftly to his companions,

"The throne room! The Vice-Regent of Aztlan!"

NOW the crowd was pressing into the throne-room; its constituent members taking such positions as were allotted to their rank. Duke noticed that the crimson-robed sect stood to the right of the throne. These, he knew now, were the priests. The military leaders, garbed in tunics and a short kirtle like that of the ancient Greeks, took their places on the Vice-Regent's left.

Behind these two groups, indiscriminately, stood the common people. The women, tradesmen, workers. All but the brown-skinned natives. As slaves, these had no place in the commune of the colony.

The three men marched to a spot just before the throne itself. There a man-at-arms halted them; gestured them to drop to their knees as he himself did. Duke looked at Quelchal dubiously. The tall Atlantean stood erect and firm, smiling slightly. Duke grinned sideways at Joey and did the same.

The man-at-arms glanced back at them, a look of horror passing over his face. He muttered a few fearful words to Quelchal. There was a murmur from the crowd, and two or three of the militia took a step forward as though to press these oddly dressed barbarian strangers to their knees.

But the Vice-Regent, staring curiously at Quelchal, halted them with a word. They fell back. Then the man on the throne spoke directly to Quelchal—and his words framed a question.

Duke felt curiously "left out" of all this. From time to time he seemed to recognize a single word of those that were being spoken between Quelchal and the Mayapan ruler. His knowledge of Mexican dialects enabled him to identify the Quiche words for "ruler," "mountain," and he once thought he caught the expression that meant, "time before tomorrow." But it was too much trouble to try to grasp the meaning behind that swift interchange of syllables. His attention wandered, and he found himself once again searching for the slim, dark-haired beauty whom he had seen in the corridor beyond.

He found her at last—and to his great glee, she had her eyes fastened on him when his gaze met hers. Once again he was treated to that soft, embarrassed blush. The girl turned her head away.

Quelchal and the ruler had done speaking at last. Now, as the Vice-Regent called several of his advisers to him, and they conferred in low undertones, Quelchal turned to his companions for a swift summary. The tall bronzed man was perspiring, and there was a worried look in his eyes.

"Everything fixed up?" Duke asked nonchalantly.

"It is harder than I had expected, Duke Callion," said Quelchal. "I am having some trouble understanding the things the Vice-Regent says. He is equally puzzled by my words."

Joey said, "What's the big idea? You speak the same language, don't you?"

"Yes, but with a difference. This period, I have learned, is one more than five hundreds of years *after* my time. The language has changed; become more involved. It is as though I were a Chaucer, attempting to converse with a man of the Seventeenth Century. Or

an Elizabethan trying to talk with a New Yorker of your day."

Duke nodded understandingly.

"But your name? Isn't that familiar to them?"

Quelchal permitted himself a grim smile.

"They have a legend of a Quelchal, a Vice-Regent, who many years ago was devoured by the volcano Teolixican. But to identify that man with *myself* —" He shrugged.

Joey said nervously, "I can't exactly blame them. It does sound kind of goofy. I wouldn't believe it either, except that—well, here we are!"

"Still," said Quelchal, "there is no cause for apprehension. After all, these are a civilized people. We have no reason to expect anything other than sympathetic treatment at their hands. When I have spoken to their intellectuals . . . their scientists . . ."

He stopped short. For now, suddenly, had come a change in the atmosphere of the judgment court. Where all had been previously calm and studied, there was now an odd tenseness. A page had stepped forward and called, "Hurkan!" and from the ranks of the crimson-robed priests had stepped forward the one who had first met the adventurers.

Now, at a sign from the Vice-Regent, he was telling his story. Prefacing it with an angry gesture in Duke's direction, he burst into a fiery flood of words; meanwhile graphically pantomiming the incidents attending the meeting.

DUKE followed his gestures with amazement that a narrative could be so excellently delineated without words. First the priest, Hurkan, swept his arms widely to indicate open space. Then suddenly his arms came together in a great circle. "The time-ship!" Duke thought. Then Hurkan let his arms drop swiftly to the ground; separated them to show the rupturing of the sphere.

Next he pointed directly at Duke . . . half-crouched on his hands and knees to portray the young American rising from the ground. And he showed himself walking forward in a calm, friendly fashion . . .

("Yeah!" thought Duke. "But where's that whip he was prodding me with?")

But Hurkan did not show that. Instead he showed Duke springing to his feet; then leaping at the throat of the priest. Dramatically, the narrator clenched his own hands about his throat; staggered backward, choking, face contorted. A low rumble rose from the assembled throng. Faces turned wrathfully toward Duke. The Vice-Regent's face hardened and he stared at the three adventurers thoughtfully.

Duke could stand no more. Forgetful that these people could not understand a word he said, he sprang forward.

"This man's a damned liar!" he roared. "Look—I'll show you what *really* happened!"

He pointed at the outraged Hurkan; then at his own breast. "I'm him!" he shouted ungrammatically. "*This* is how he actually did it—"

He raised an imaginary whip; prodded it at something presumably lying before him. Then he stepped back a pace. As well as he could remember that scene, he acted it out for the watching assembly. Finally he reached the high spot of his pantomime . . . the spot where Hurkan took a whip and deliberately began to lash at the man before him.

Then Duke stopped, at a loss as to how to express justification for what he had then done. He said simply, "So then—I defended myself. Tell them, Quelchal. Tell them I grabbed this Hurkan guy in self-defense."

But before Quelchal had a chance to say anything, there was a slight stir in the midst of the crimson-robed priesthood. The girl whom he had been staring at so ardently had pushed into that group; was whispering now, swiftly, to a gray-haired man of kindly mien. The elderly priest nodded and moved forward. He inclined his head graciously toward Duke, made a bow to the Vice-Regent, then addressed Quelchal.

Quelchal's answer evidently satisfied him. He turned to the Vice-Regent and spoke swiftly. The ruler of Mayapan turned questioningly to Hurkan.

Quelchal explained swiftly, "We've found a friend. This priest, Lucan, is begging clemency for us. He understood your claim that Hurkan attacked you first. He—"

But now Hurkan was speaking again, with impassioned eloquence. And that the man had eloquence, no one could deny. He held the crowd breathless on the flowing cadences of his voice; swayed them with his words, and roused their rapidly mounting ire against the strangers to fever-pitch with the incontrovertible accusations he flung at them.

Even the ruler's impartial judgment was influenced by the man's words. As Hurkan's voice grew louder and more assured, his glances at the three captives became sterner. He, too, was feeling the effect of the mob-anger Hurkan was so perfectly arousing.

THE muttering heightened; became a low, rumbling undercurrent of menace. Lucan attempted to speak, and the crowd jeered him into helpless silence. Hurkan raved on; gesticulating wildly, threatening, demanding. Finally he pointed a quivering finger at the three; stamped his foot, and turned to the ruler. He almost screamed his challenge at that uncertain personage . . .

Quelchal said, "It's bad, Duke! He's got them under his spell! They believe—"

And then the Vice-Regent signalled for silence. Instantly a deathly stillness fell over the court-room—a hush in which Duke could feel the throbbing undertone of hatred beating against him and his companions in mighty waves.

The Vice-Regent slowly rose from his throne. He raised a hand importantly; glanced skyward. Through a high slitted window near the roof of the throne room, a lance of golden sunlight struck down upon his face, etching its hard lines into sharp relief.

It was like an omen. All present felt it. For an instant the Vice-Regent held that pose; hand weighted like the hand of doom. Then his arm made a wide, sweeping gesture—and fell! A tumult of approval drowned out the word that left his lips . . .

A host of jostling, blood-hungry figures moved in on the three adventurers. Quelchal's face was a pale mask of fury. In a thunderous voice he cried,

"The fool! He has listened to Hurkan! Sentenced us to die on the altar of the sun-god, Ray-moe!"

Then rude hands fell upon Duke, tearing him from his friends. As he lashed out about him in blind, futile wrath, he glimpsed, for just a moment, a whiteclad figure in the background. A girl with horror-stricken eyes.

Then sheer numbers hemmed him in; overpowered him. He was grasped by a horde of eager hands, lifted and borne away . . .

CHAPTER IX

The White God Speaks

BY straining a little against the gnawing rawhide thongs that bound him, Duke could turn his head from side to side. He did so now.

It was an imposing spectacle. Were

he on his feet to see it, rather than lashed to this pock-marked, circular stone, he might have appreciated it. But he could take no archeological interest in a temple when, within the space of minutes, he might become a human sacrifice to the god of that temple!

The mob had carried him and his two companions to the crest of a great pyramid which rose in several terraces, and was surmounted by twin temples, each three stories high. What divinity was served by the other temple, Duke did not know. This one was dedicated to the sun-god, Ray-moe.

"The life-giving god," Duke remembered out of a scattered knowledge of early mythologies. He smiled wryly. There was visible evidence that Ray-moe was life-*taking* as well as giving. The coarse slab to which he was secured was brown with blotchy stains. The walls of the temple were spattered with a dirty encrustation certainly not native to the quarried stone. So, too, were the steps up which the captives had been borne.

Duke remembered, suddenly, the early Aztec custom of tearing the heart, still beating, out of the breasts of human sacrifices—then rolling the quivering body down the temple steps as a symbol of degradation. He shuddered.

Beside him, similarly bound to the altar, were his two companions. Quelchal, his fury spent, lay in dignified silence; too proud to display an emotion before the watching crowd. Not so Joey, however. He was tugging at his bonds, muttering angrily as the rawhide merely bit deeper into his wrists, and groaning,

"Out of the f-f-frying-pan, Duke. I w-w-wish we were back home in Cincinnati!"

Duke said quietly, "The Fates were against us from the beginning, Joey. There's no use struggling. You can't break loose from that rawhide."

Joey panted, "I know. But if I c-c-could just get into my p-p-pocket for a minute—"

The sun was almost overhead now. From the bottom of the pyramid steps rose the sound of a thin, high chanting. The voices of the priests, intoning the prelude to the sacrificial ceremony. High noon approached. The hour sacred to Ray-moe. The hour when he would claim his due.

The chanting drew nearer. There was the odor of fragrant incense on the air. A group of altar neophytes, barefooted, cassocked, appeared at the crest of the pyramid; shuffled forward slowly to pace three times around the slab. Solemn as carven figures, they looked neither to left nor right.

A cymbal crashed; its echo dying away with infinite slowness. As the last throbbing note died into muted silence, the priests themselves appeared in their crimson robes. As they passed by, Duke saw two faces not masked with frozen piety. That of the friendly priest, Lucan, was sad. Hurkan's eyes were hard; gloating.

They, too, made a slow circle about the captives; then halted in a great wheel, which took as its hub the altar. One man, whose crimson gown was crusted with golden ornament, stepped forward. The High Priest.

A hush had fallen over the assemblage. The High Priest of Ray-moe stepped forward to the altar; looked at the three captives for a long moment. Then, with a great cry, he lifted his arms high above his head, threw back his head, and looked directly at the sun.

It was high noon in Mayapan, and the sun was like a great, brazen ball of fire hanging low in the cloudless sky. It was a marvel that the sun-priest's eyes could stand the strain. But he held that pose without blinking, without

Joey twisted and writhed as the priest raised the knife

flinching, while he recited a long, ceremonial prayer.

The dedication ended. The High Priest turned to those behind him. A close-tonsured neophyte handed him a silken cushion, in which nestled a jet blade of razor-edged obsidian. Again came the clash of the cymbal. The priest raised the knife; made a swift, cryptic gesture of blessing over it. The last act of the drama was about to unfold.

JOEY was twisting and writhing on the slab beside Duke. His face was dripping with perspiration, as still he struggled to get his hand into his pocket for a reason Duke did not try to guess. Quelchal maintained his haughty silence. Duke's own lips remained sealed as the sun-god's priest stepped forward and ripped the khaki shirt asunder at his breast.

Quelchal's was the next breast to be bared to the knife. Then Joey's. And now, with the sacrifices ready, the High Priest stopped before Joey and addressed a question to him.

Quelchal twisted his head to face Duke.

"I am sorry, Duke Callion," he said drearily. "I did not guess that this was to be our fate."

Duke tried to grin. "Skip it!" he said. "It's not your fault. It's just like Joey said—the cards were against us from the beginning. Anyhow, it was fun while it lasted."

Joey, still struggling, panted indignantly, "Aw, go sit on a tack, you jabbering monkey! Quelchal, what's this guy want? What's he trying to say?"

"He's asking you your name," replied Quelchal. "It is a part of the ceremony. He's dedicating your life to the sun-god."

Joey snorted, "My name, hey? I'll tell him what my name is!"

He had finally succeeded in reaching his pocket. Now, with a ripping of tortured seams, he jerked it forth again. In it was a small, glistening object. His thumb moved. He shouted,

"All right, you in the red nightgown, I'll tell you my name. It's Joey Cox. Get that? C-cox! And I'm a bigger shot than your phoney sun-god ever was!"

He turned to Quelchal wildly.

"Tell him that, Quelchal! Tell him what I just said!"

Duke said, "What's the idea, Joey? Have you—"

Quelchal was repeating Joey's words to the priest. Now Joey was shouting again; words spilling from his lips in an eager flood.

"Tell him," he roared, "that I'm the sun-god's son-in-law. Or his grandson. Tell him I'm going to show him a miracle. Make him look at me!"

Wonderingly, Quelchal repeated the words. Again the High Priest stared at Joey; this time hesitantly. He spoke briefly; began to raise his knife. He poised it over Joey's breast.

Duke's heart sank. For a moment he had hopes that Joey's bluff would work. Against these superstitious people, a claim to godhood *might* have succeeded. But now it was too late. He closed his eyes. . . .

Then they jerked open again, suddenly, as a great roar of amazement rose from the crowd that thronged the temple of Ray-moe! Even the stolid priests were murmuring amongst themselves, and the High Priest, his eyes round in amazement, was moving backward. His black knife clattered to the stone pavement.

And Duke loosed a great roar of glee! Joey *had* performed his miracle! In his right hand, a tiny flame was glowing. A flame that already was licking at the rawhide thongs that bound him. Joey's miracle was—a cigarette lighter!

The thong spluttered, scorched, fell away. Joey fought loose of its coils; rose to his feet on the slab, towering above the stunned crowd. In his moment of greatness, he even *looked* godlike as he drowned out their cries of fear with his roaring.

"S-s-so you wanted to know my n-n-name, eh? Well, it's C-c-cox! Joey C-c-cox! And you'd better r-r-remember it, too!"

He leaped down from the slab; retrieved the stone knife that had fallen from the priest's nerveless fingers. Swiftly he slashed the bonds that held Duke and Quelchal. Then wildly, gloriously, he advanced toward the backward-pressing throng, still shouting his noisy challenge.

"T-t-truss *us* up like a Christmas turkey, would you? Well, w-w-we'll see! Quelchal, t-t-tell 'em what I'm saying. Tell 'em I'm the sun-god's favorite nephew. That the old boy died and left me some of his fire in this box. And that they'd better a damn' sight do what I t-t-tell 'em or I'll—"

Quelchal spoke swiftly. But he did not need to speak. The crowd had already accepted Joey Cox at his own self-evaluation. A miracle had been performed. A god had created fire out of a metal box. It was enough for them.

From the civilian crowd, first, came the response to Joey's raging demands. A faint, stifled cry, "C-cox! Aieee! Cacox!" Then the priests, too, acknowledged this new white god. Scarlet robes crumpled as they fell to their knees. The weak chant grew louder; gathered volume as more voices picked it up. "Coxcox! Aiee! Coxcox!"

Duke shouted gleefully, "You've done it, Joey! You've got 'em eating out of the palm of your hand!" And a dark cloud chased over his forehead.

He gritted, "Hurkan! Where did he go? That's one guy I want to—"

Quelchal pointed to the plain far below them; to the base of the pyramid. A solitary, crimson-robed figure was racing across the sand. A priest who had perjured a god was fleeing for his life.

"We need trouble ourselves with Hurkan no longer," said Quelchal. "His life is forfeit—and he knows it!"

The mob, gathering courage now that the new white gods had not seen fit to bring thunderbolts crashing down upon them, was pressing forward. But this time there was no blood hunger in their forward surge. They grovelled at Joey's feet; eyes abject. A few of the more daring reached forth eager hands to touch his shoes, his trouser legs. The High Priest, his fine raiment forgotten, was foremost of the worshippers. In an ecstasy of abasement, he pressed his lips to the ground where Joey had trod. And ever the cry rose in volume, "C-cox! Cacox! Coxcox!"

Duke grinned.

"Well, Joey," he said, "how does it feel to be a god?"

But Joey's sweating face was crimson with embarrassment. His anger gone, a new grief had risen to meet him.

"L-l-listen!" he raged. "Do you h-h-hear them? The damn fools are s-s-*stuttering* my name!"

CHAPTER X

The Dangerous Quest

"TOPTLIPETLOCALI!"

Duke Callion repeated, "Toplipt—toptlip—"and faltered into silence. "Come again, Pyrrha. I can't even get *near* the darned word!"

Joey Cox riffled the greasy deck of playing cards with which he had been dealing solitaire.

"I'm g-g-glad it's you that's trying to l-l-learn this language," he said amusedly. "Imagine m-m-*me* working out on a tongue-twister like that!"

Quelchal glanced up from his conversation with the friendly priest, Lucan, and smiled.

"Perhaps," he suggested, "you might ask Pyrrha the *meaning* of the word, Duke. I believe you're getting a bit 'nearer' to it than you think."

Duke said, "Hey? What's that?" and turned to the girl. In halting Atlantean he put the question to her. A heightened color came into her cheeks. Her laughter tinkled through the room; then suddenly she leaped up and ran away. Duke stared after her bewilderedly. Of Quelchal he demanded,

"Now, what the blazes did you do that for? How do you expect me to learn this language if you're going to bust up my lessons with your wisecracks?" Then, suspiciously, "Well—what *does* the word mean, anyway?"

"It means," answered Quelchal, smiling, "'Altar'! But, come. We have much to discuss. Lucan, here, has a map for us—"

Joey rose hastily.

"If you'll p-p-pardon me," he said, "I've got to see a fellow about a p-p-pyramid. See you later!" Pocketing his well-thumbed deck of cards, he ambled out of the room. Duke grinned after him affectionately.

"Good old Joey. No use trying to make him discuss plans. He's a doer; not a thinker. I learned that years ago."

Quelchal shrugged and returned to the perusal of his parchments.

"Well, it's all right. Joey is playing an important enough role as it is. The people here absolutely worship him, and he's making himself more and more popular every day with his card tricks and sleight-of-hand."

"Not to mention the fact," added

Duke, "that he's responsible for our being here! Well, you've broken up *my* pleasant afternoon. Now let's get going."

ALMOST three weeks had passed since Joey's burst of genius had saved the time-travellers from sacrifice on the altar of Ray-moe.

By now, Joey Cox—or "Coxcox," as the Mayapans persisted in calling him—was the colonists' supreme deity. His every whim was their law. And why not? He was a "god," living amongst them as a mortal. A pleasant, friendly god on whom they could bestow their tangible admiration. And Joey, moreover, reciprocated their affection.

One of his first acts had been the elevation of Lucan to the High Priesthood. In the new and larger headquarters which became Lucan's abode, the three made their temporary residence.

Temporary, because by now Quelchal was burning to set sail for distant Aztlan, that his long-cherished mission of warning might be fulfilled.

Not so Duke Callion. Like Joey, he was perfectly content to remain right here in Mayapan—but for a somewhat different reason. A dark-haired and dark-eyed reason blessed with lissome grace. A reason answering to the name of Pyrrha; niece of Lucan the Priest. Duke Callion's interest in learning the Atlantean tongue was a passion less orthological than biological!

But there was upon him an obligation. In spite of misgivings which he had never succeeded in shaking off—an inner conviction that it lay within no man's power to alter the Past—he was still Quelchal's friend. He would accompany him to the end of their adventure. After that he would be free to return to Mayapan—and Pyrrha.

Lucan was troubled. He lay the parchment on which he had been working before Quelchal and Duke.

"It is unfortunate," he said, "that you will not be patient; wait for the next ship to arrive from Aztlan. As you know, we of the colony have never been great builders of sailing vessels. All that we can provide you is one of the smaller sloops left here by the King's fleet."

Quelchal said gravely, "It will suffice. Already we have wasted more time than is good. We must leave just as soon as possible."

Duke said, "But, Quelchal, I thought it was your intention to repair the time-ship? Go back in that?"

"It was, Duke Callion. But now I find that is impossible. It was too severely damaged. And—" Quelchal smiled. "—surely you understand by now that in any Time it would return us to Mayapan. These are the maps, Lucan?"

"Yes. I think you will find them accurate."

"I am sure of it." Quelchal bent over the parchments; nodding from time to time. "Ah, yes, I recognize these small islands. 'Turnanogg,'* I believe, is the name given them."

Duke stared at the map curiously. It resembled a map of the Atlantic Ocean such as he had seen when a lad in school—but with several startling differences. There was, for one thing, a long neck of land standing far out into the ocean from that which Duke remembered as Guiana. Spain was an elongated peninsula stretching westward until it formed a long, narrow sea between Europe and northern Africa. This portion of the mainland included what Duke's memory told him must, in the Twentieth Century, be the island of Madeira.

A curious knob of land jutted from

* The Irish "heaven," St. Brendan's Isle of fable, song and story was known as "Tir-na-n'oge." It was an isle of golden wealth and beauty.—Author

the Gold Coast section of Africa out to the sea. Duke, puzzled, thought of the islands of St. Paul, and the tiny Ascension group. These must have been, in his time—already he could only think of the Twentieth Century as some remote era—high, mountain peaks on the African extension.

BUT most amazing of all was the existence, right off the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea, of a huge island. And, Duke thought, it was really huge! As large as Iceland. No—larger still. Almost as large as Greenland, for the island which lay above it and to the westward was almost as great as Iceland.

He placed a finger on the large island.

"This is our destination?" he asked. "This is Aztlan?"

"Yes, Duke Callion!" Quelchal's eyes were glowing warmly. "That is my homeland. The source of all the world's culture. The land which, were it not for us, is to sink beneath the waves in—"

He paused abruptly and peered at Lucan from beneath his blond, shaggy brows.

"Have your calculations told you anything about that, Lucan? Have you been able to correlate the facts I gave you?"

Lucan sighed.

"Very little, Quelchal. The legends of the Future whence you came are so faulty. Greek and Babylonian deluge legends mean nothing to me. I know of no persons called 'Greeks'. There *is* a country to the eastward which we call 'Biblon', but—"

"In Mexico," interposed Duke, "I once heard an old Quiche Indian tell a racial legend about a great flood. He said that in the fourth age, which he called Atonatiuh, there was—"

Lucan and Quelchal had both come to their feet of a sudden. Quelchal gripped the young American's arm.

"Atonatiuh!*" he cried. "The Sun of Water! Duke Callion, that is *this* age! Every man knows that the time of mankind is divided into four ages. The age of Giants, the age of Fire, the age of Monkeys, the age of Water!

"Remember! Remember swiftly! What did the legend say? When was this age supposed to have ended?"

Duke's brow furrowed in the intensity of his effort to remember.

"I was hardly listening at the time. I remember that a man and a woman were supposed to have escaped the Deluge on the trunk of a cypress tree. All other men were supposed to have been changed to fish . . ."

"Yes, Duke Callion! But the date? You *must* remember the date!"

"I do! I remember now. The old Quiche said: 'In the fourth age, Atonatiuh, whose number is ten times four hundred plus eight, came down the rains upon earth—' "

"Four thousand and eight!" cried the two men simultaneously. And they looked at each other in sudden horror. Lucan's face paled. The life seemed to seep out of Quelchal's body. For the first time since Duke had known him, his proud erectness vanished. He let his head fall forward into his hands.

Duke faltered, "But—but I don't understand. Is there something wrong?"

Lucan echoed, "Wrong!" hollowly, and the Atlantean raised his head to answer Duke with a great bitterness.

"More than that, Duke Callion! It means our trip is a failure. For the Atlantean year 4008 is—this year!"

(To Be Concluded Next Month)

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* Then comes the fourth age, *Atonatiuh*, 'Sun of Water,' whose number is 10 times 400 plus 8, or 4008. It ends by a great inundation, a veritable deluge. All mankind are changed into fish with the exception of one man and his wife who save themselves in a bark made of the trunk of a cypress tree. . . ."—from the *Codex Vaticanus*

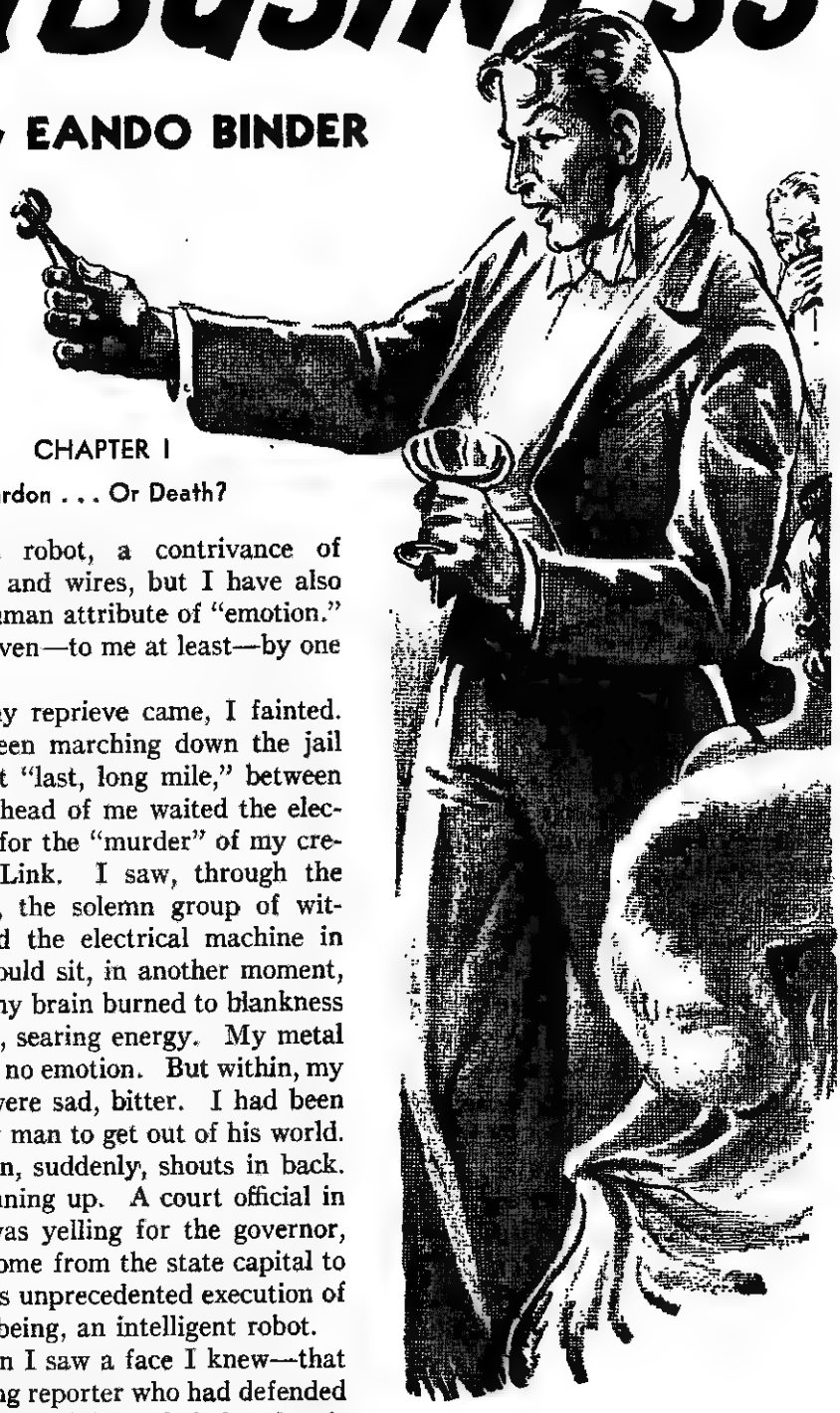
ADAM LINK

In his hand he held—a can opener! Despite Kay Temple's restraining hand on my metal arm, I surged to my feet amid sudden, tense silence.

ADAM Link finds out that human hearts are not machines, and discovers for the first time the real meaning of human love.

I'm in BUSINESS

By EANDO BINDER



CHAPTER I

Pardon . . . Or Death?

I AM a robot, a contrivance of wheels and wires, but I have also that human attribute of "emotion." This is proven—to me at least—by one thing.

When my reprieve came, I fainted.

I had been marching down the jail hall in that "last, long mile," between guards. Ahead of me waited the electric chair, for the "murder" of my creator, Dr. Link. I saw, through the open door, the solemn group of witnesses, and the electrical machine in which I would sit, in another moment, and have my brain burned to blankness by surging, searing energy. My metal face shows no emotion. But within, my thoughts were sad, bitter. I had been ordered by man to get out of his world.

And then, suddenly, shouts in back. People running up. A court official in the lead was yelling for the governor, who had come from the state capital to witness this unprecedented execution of a created being, an intelligent robot.

And then I saw a face I knew—that of the young reporter who had defended me in his editorials, and shaken hands

with me after my sentence, in sympathy. He was flushed, panting. My gaze swerved and I was startled to see several other faces I knew.

The governor came hurrying out of the death-chamber.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded.

The young reporter stepped forward boldly. "I'm Jack Hall, sir, of the Evening Post," he said clearly, in the hushed silence. "The state has convicted an innocent—man! Adam Link is not the murderer of Dr. Charles Link. I demand that you listen to me!"

He was being unnecessarily dramatic, but quite forgivably, I decided later. He signaled to a young man and woman, standing arm in arm, staring at me in eager fascination.

"Tell your story," Jack Hall prompted.

The young man spoke. "This—this robot was the one who saved us from the fire, two weeks ago. I was unconscious most of the time, while he carried us out of the burning building, but once I opened my eyes. I distinctly saw the metal body. I can't be mistaken. I know that now, especially after this reporter took us back to the site of the fire yesterday. I know I couldn't have jumped *thirty feet* across to the next building, nor could Dora. The robot did it. We owe him our lives!"

A gasp and murmur went up among the listeners. Jack Hall waited a moment, then pointed a dramatic finger at a middle-aged lady holding a child by the hand.

She spoke, as though at a cue. Jack Hall had evidently prearranged all this.

"The robot saved my boy. Everybody saw it, in front of the court-house the day of the trial. He is not a monster, if he did that. I—I—" She choked and turned to look full at me. "God bless you, sir!"

I don't know how the others felt. For myself, at that moment, I felt death would be sweet, with this tribute as my last memory in life.

The governor cleared his throat. "I am afraid this is irrelevant," he said gruffly. "We did not pass judgment, in the trial, on Adam Link's—uh—character. He is still the murderer of Dr. Link."

YES, that was the issue. I had saved three lives, but taken one, circumstantially. By the mathematics of law, the former cancelled to zero because of the latter. It was hopeless to expect any pardon from the governor. Jack Hall should know that, better than I. I wanted to express my deep gratitude for his act, at least giving me the cloak of a martyr before death, but at the same time, I thought him foolishly impractical.

The end had only been delayed for a moment. I was marked for death. But queerly now, the air had changed. Where all these people before had been hostile, or at least indifferent to me, eyes were now downcast. Joyful wonder gripped me. Were a mixed group of humans, for the first time, *sympathizing* with me? Had I won my rightful place—at the brink of extinction?

The thought was both uplifting, and hollowly painful. I must have felt as a racer would, winning a hard-fought grind, only to have his car explode in his face at the finish-line.

I looked at Jack Hall reproachfully. He had made my last moment harder to bear. He must have felt that, behind the impassive metal of my "face." He shot me a look that said, "Wait, friend."

Then he whirled, pulling forward the other person I knew. The lady who had been Dr. Link's weekly house-

keeper. She it was who had seen me bent over the corpse of Dr. Link, skull smashed. She had been the prosecution's key witness! What mad thing had prompted Jack Hall to bring her here? Everyone stiffened, recalling that despite saving lives, I had first brutally cracked the skull of my creator. I might be partly a saint—but also a devil. A Mr. Hyde as well as Dr. Jekyll. And a—Frankenstein!

Better that he goes, I knew they were all thinking now. Intelligent he may be, capable of good at times. But what of the moments when his trustless mechanical brain urged him to kill, with brute hands powered by steel muscles? He would run amuck, sooner or later, killing wantonly.

THE atmosphere was tense.

The housekeeper, prompted by the reporter, finally spoke, nervously.

"This gentleman"—she pointed out Jack Hall—"called on me yesterday. He kept asking me questions. And then I remembered one thing. On the day Dr. Link died, I was hanging up the wash, in the yard. I heard the sound from his laboratory, something striking flesh, and then a moan, and I ran in. I saw the robot standing over the—the body, just like I said in court. And—"

"Well?" grunted the governor.

"I—I didn't remember, sir, till this reporter questioned me. Please, sir, I didn't mean to lie! I just didn't remember then. You see, I heard the sound of this—this robot running up from the storeroom below, where Dr. Link kept him out of sight, the days I came. I heard the robot's steps very clearly, sir, *after* I heard Dr. Link moan as something struck him! Please, sir, I didn't mean to lie—"

"That's all right," said Jack Hall soothingly, patting her shoulder. "Just be quiet now."

He faced around. "Sorry to spoil the fun, gentlemen," he said in a breezy manner characteristic of his profession. "You heard the witness. She'll testify to that on the Bible. Adam Link was 35 feet away when the instrument that caused Dr. Link's death crushed his skull. It was purely accidental—a loose angle-iron falling from a transformer shelf, as the defense maintained."

The governor, who had studied the case thoroughly, looked skeptical, despite what the woman had said. "No blood-stains were found on that angle-iron, as the defense admitted," he reminded. "There were blood-stains only on Adam Link's hand and arm!"

"Yes, because Adam Link arrived and raised the angle-iron so swiftly that bleeding had not yet occurred. Have you ever seen Adam Link move—fast? He is like chained lightning!" Jack Hall's answer had been quick. He went on more quickly. "As a matter of fact, there *were* blood-stains on the angle-iron. You see, the body had slumped forward. It was not the front end of the angle-iron that struck, but the *back* end, formerly hinged!"

He waved to a distinguished looking man at his side, the last of those he had brought. "Dr. Polson, eminent biologist and authority on blood-stains!"

"There are three dried blood drops at the back end of that angle-iron," Dr. Polson said authoritatively. "They check with Dr. Link's blood samples!"

Jack Hall faced the governor now. "The prosecution's whole case was built around the housekeeper's testimony, and the blood-stains on Adam Link's arm, supposedly lacking on the angle-iron. Now both points are reversed. You, sir, have the unique honor of correcting one of the worst miscarriages of justice this bad little world ever saw!"

"I grant reprieve," returned the governor, visibly stunned. "The blood-

stains will be checked. If investigation proves that point, I'll make out a pardon for Adam Link!"

But everyone knew there could no longer be doubt. Dr. Polson was too famed to be wrong.

It was then I fainted. I can only describe it as a welling joy that choked me, made my brain dizzy, so that I clattered to my knees. Or perhaps it was just a sudden surge of electrons against the center of locomotion within my iridium-sponge brain.

MY mind cleared in a moment, before I had fallen flat. As I arose again, I murmured something but it was drowned out by the sudden cheer that rang from the people around. And in that moment, I knew I had gained a secure foothold in human society, monster though I was in form.

"Damn fools!" muttered Jack Hall. "One moment ready to execute you, the next cheering you!"

The pardon came through eight hours later. "Come, Adam old boy," said Jack. "Let's have a drink toge- I mean let's go to my room and have a talk."

I will pass rather sketchily over much that happened later.

Jack Hall and I had many talks together. The hubbub died down, and the newspapers found other headlines besides the story of my "heroism" and Jack Hall's "breaking" of the case. I found him a very likeable young man, shrewd, witty, worldly wise. I learned much from him, things the books I had read didn't reveal.

He seemed to take a delight in making me his bosom companion, and introducing me to all his friends.

"Adam old fellow," as he explained to me one day, with a cheerful inflection that made me feel at home with him—made me feel *human*— "you've got to get around, meet people. You're legally a human being now, no question of that. People will soon take you for granted, accept you as a fellow man. You're going to register for the fall elections and vote. Heaven help the man that protests, because I'll stink him out in an editorial!"

"It's a dream come true, Jack," I returned. "Both mine and my creator's. His aim was to make me a citizen. But tell me"—I was curious—"why are you going to all this trouble for me?"

I knew it wasn't mere publicity he sought. Jack Hall wasn't that type. It was something within himself.

"I don't know," he returned vaguely. "Except that I always take the side of the underdog. Always did, I guess."

And I saw that clearly, one day, when he stepped into a street fight, protecting an undersized man from the coarse attack of a big, foul-mouthed ruffian. The origin of the fight was never clear. I watched Jack Hall wade in and bear the brunt of the hulking man's brutal blows. When my friend went down, nose streaming blood, I stepped up. The big man was about to kick Jack while he was down.

I grasped the man's belt, jerked him off his feet, and suspended him at arm's length. I held him that way till he stopped bellowing and squirming like a fish out of water. Then I dropped him. He picked himself up and slunk away, without a word.

"Good way to stop a fight, Adam Link," said the policeman who came up a moment later. "You ought to join the force."

CHAPTER II

A Business Venture

JACK took me to many poker games among his reporter friends. I began

to acquire a decided liking for the game. But eventually they blackballed me from their games. I always won. My thinking processes, triggered by electrons, are instantaneous, and unerringly mathematical. I never drew two to a straight, or three to a pair against the opener at my left. It is sheer challenge against the inexorable laws of numbers. Then, too, I had the perfect "poker" face. I bluffed outrageously.

We tried bridge for a while, but here, at the seventh or eighth trick, I already knew every suit-holding in the opponents' hands, by deduction. Bridge experts do that, too. But bridge experts can't figure out every card's denomination, as I do. I use intricate mathematical sequences of probability that serve me 75 per cent of the time.

"You're a mental wizard, Adam," said one of the boys in disgust at being set four on what looked like a sure slam. "You ought to capitalize on it."

And that night, Jack Hall, rather preoccupied, spoke to me more seriously than usual.

"Capitalize on it!" he echoed the statement. "Look, Adam, have you any plans for the future? You've got a long life ahead of you—" He looked at me in sudden startlement. "Say, just how long *will* you live?"

I smiled mentally. "Till my iridium-sponge brain oxidizes away—which may not be for centuries!" I went on very seriously. "Yes, Jack, that's been my thought, too. I've been content in these past weeks to just learn something of life. But I must have a purpose in this world, a place. My kind can be useful to civilization."

"You mean you're thinking of having more robots built like you?"

I shook my head, a mannerism I had picked up quite naturally.

"No, not yet. First I, the Adam of all intelligent robots, must find out many things. I must adjust myself to useful life among humans, so that I can later show the way to others of my kind. But just how best to serve mankind, I'm not quite sure. I—"

The phone rang. Jack answered, and then called me to it, explaining it was Dr. Polson.

"Adam Link?" the biologist said. "I was at your court trial. You were asked many scientific questions there, in the defense's proof of your intelligence, and you answered them all. I remember particularly that when asked what hormone promotes growth, you not only gave the name but the formula. I've finally checked, with that clue, and found you're right! But good Heavens"—now the voice became excited—*"how did you know a formula no other scientist on Earth knew?"*

"I deduced the formula," I answered truthfully, "from existing data."

A strange sort of sigh came from the scientist. "I'm glad I helped save you from extinction, Adam Link. Come and work with us," he begged. "You're a genius!"

I pondered that for a long time, that is, long for me—several seconds. "No," I returned, hanging up.

But when I faced Jack Hall again, it had clarified in my mind—what I wanted to do. "I will become a consultant, Jack. That is my place in life." I went on, outlining what I meant.

"Fine!" agreed my friend. "That way you'll make a living, not to mention money! I'll set you up in an office—"

AND that was how I went into business, with an office on the 22nd floor of the Marle Building, downtown. On the office door were the gold-leaf letters: "Adam Link, Incorporated." Jack's idea, of course.

He also arranged my advertising, and

gave me free publicity in his paper. And so, soon, I was "making a living," although that thought is rather incongruous to me. My purpose is not to do the best for myself, but to do my best for others.

Within a month, people flocked for my services. Chemists came to me with knotty reactions, on paper. I straightened them out, on paper. Often I failed. But more often I helped. Every industry in the city sought me out, on problems ranging anywhere from proper factory lighting to the intricacies of subatomic researches. I worked mainly with formulae, using the hammer of mathematics to straighten the bent implements of industry.

It is hard to explain my ability to do these things. To correct a chemical reaction, for instance, without ever seeing the ingredients, or coming within a mile of the laboratory. I had been reading steadily, having gone through every scientific and technical book in several libraries. I bought all the latest scientific and trade journals and books. I read each with my television eyes, in a few minutes. I remembered every word, every equation, with my indelible memory. And somehow, my iridium-sponge brain integrated all this knowledge, with the sureness of a machine.

I suppose it seems a sort of miraculous ability. You will have to take my word for it. Or else, I can show you the records of checks received for my services. Money began to pour in. I never set a fee. Checks came in unsolicited, from grateful business men.

AND now I come to the more significant part of what I wish to set down. Almost, I feel it is no use to write of it—that I can never explain. But so much nonsense, some of it shamefully rude, has been written about this that I feel I must at least try to show how it came about. How, if not why.

Jack Hall had been dropping in regularly, helping me organize the consultant business, and handling my accounts. Banking my money one day, he came back whistling in surprise.

"Adam, old man," he said, "you're making money hand over fist. And your accounts are becoming involved. You need a secretary." He snapped his fingers. "I know just the girl—good worker and a good looker—" He broke off. Sometimes it was hard for him to remember that I was a metal man, not flesh and blood. "She's out of a job right now," he continued. "She's had dozens of them. They never last. Why? Because she's pretty, and her various ex-bosses forgot she came just to work."

I knew what he meant. Through Jack I have learned of that phase of human life which, I'm afraid, will never be quite clear to me.

Jack brought her in the next day.

She was pretty; in fact, beautiful. I can appreciate natural beauty, lest you think not. Jack had often taken me on drives through woodland scenery. Though he does not know it, he is romantic by nature. I remember one view, from a high hill, overlooking sweeping fields and woods, with piled white clouds above. We stood together, drinking it in. One needs only a mind to appreciate those things. I have a mind.

Kay Temple was beautiful, I repeat. Pleasant, classical features, with hazel eyes that could smile or look faintly tragic. Her hair was dark, with a soft sheen to it, in sunlight. When she walked, there was grace in every movement.

"How do you do, Mr. Link?" she said, coming forward a little hesitantly and extending her hand. Her voice was

low, musical, to my sensitive mechanical tympanums, whereas so many human voices are strident.

Her soft little hand, resting in my cold, hard, metallic substitute for one, was a new experience for me. Not physical, of course. It was just that the incongruous contrast suddenly made clear to me that I was a *man*, in mind, not a woman. This is understandable, in that I had begun life, under Dr. Link, purely from the man's viewpoint. That is, I had come to think of and see all things in that peculiar way human males do, as distinguished from human females.

And Kay Temple's presence suddenly made that clear to me. For I saw instantly that I couldn't read her feelings, or her outlook, as quickly as I could all human men with whom I had come in contact. She was, from the first moment—mystery.

"Here you are, Kay," said Jack bustlingly, sweeping a hand around. "Your new job. Up and coming business. Fine boss. Don't say your Uncle Jack hasn't done right by you!"

I smiled to myself. Solely by the strange inflection he gave the words "Uncle Jack," I knew he was hopelessly in love with her. How could I know that? How can I know even the meaning of the words "in love"—I, a robot of cold, senseless metal, with a heart consisting of an electrical distributor! You will see—later.

"Thanks much, Jack," she said in a quiet, earnest way. I tried to read her attitude toward Jack, but failed utterly. She was again—mystery.

I thanked Jack myself, earnestly, a few days later. Kay Temple was a godsend to me, in the business, which had begun to grow unwieldy. She was efficiency itself. She handled all appointments, calls, fees, recording. She made the suggestion one day that I set a minimum fee of a thousand dollars an hour, to limit my clientele. I was, after all, but one person. The fee was not too high. I often solved problems in minutes.

After business hours, the three of us would sometimes go out together. I joined them at dinners, though food does not pass my lips, of course. My "food" consists of electrical current, supplied by powerful batteries within the pelvic part of my frame. In my spare moments, I had devised a more compact and powerful battery, so that I could "run" a week without change, instead of the 48 hours Dr. Link had originally started me with. The battery, incidentally, superior to any before, is on the market now, under public domain. I didn't want to patent it myself, purely for gain.

After dinner, we would go to a show, or play, or some other entertainment. I enjoy them as much as anyone else. If they are good. If they aren't I enjoy them as the ridiculous nonsense with which you humans so often attempt to entertain each other. I am afraid that in such cases, I laugh *at* rather than *with* them. I am not taking a superior stand, though. I would warrant that a world of robots, like myself, would also plumb the depths of shallow absurdity to while away dull hours.

Yes, I know hours of dullness, too. I am not all steady industry, activity, the tirelessness of a machine. There are times when my brain sags, when a "blue" feeling steals over me, when things seem hollow, empty. And remember that I have 24 hours a day to fill. Sometimes I long to have the gift of sleep!

Perhaps you think I am merely trying to make myself out as near-human in my mental processes. I could know all those things simply by reading. I have no answer for that, except what happened later.

TO get back to my companions and "night life," I recall with mixed pleasure and pain one certain evening, in a cabaret. The master-of-ceremonies, picking out celebrities, finally turned the limelight on me.

"Adam Link, ladies and gentlemen!" he said. "The talking, walking, thinking robot! Be he man or be he beast, he's got what it takes. His weekly income would make most of us turn bright green with envy. We all know of his heroism in the fire, and saving a child. Take a bow, Adam. You can see, folks, that he doesn't do it with mirrors. Nor is he run by strings. He's the real thing!"

I arose and bowed slightly, at Jack's urging. I did not mind the master-of-ceremonies' bantering, for beneath it there had been respect. And the answering burst of applause was wholehearted. I felt a deep glow. Now, more than before, I realized I had been accepted in the world of man. Even the inevitable autograph-hunter boldly walked up, held out his book. I signed with my usual scrawl, since I do not have the fine control over my hands that you humans have.

"Wait!" said the master-of-ceremonies, as I was about to sit down. "Take a chair, there, Adam, and show us how you can crumple it up like matchwood with your hands. Go ahead—we'll gladly stand the cost. He doesn't know his own strength, folks. And yet, he's gentle as a lamb. Okay, Adam—"

But this I did not want to do. I do not care to display my brute powers, so meaningless, when it is my mind that counts. Jack, quick to see this, hastily signalled negatively to the man.

"Sorry, Adam!" the master-of-ceremonies said smoothly. "No offense. So instead we'll play a brand new ditty one of my boys composed. It'll be a hit, or *I'm* a robot! Title—'Who Do I Mean?' Warble it, Honey!"

It is a hit. You've all heard it. "Honey," the club's singer, rendered it nicely. I listened, a bit bewildered.

"He has a heart of gold,
And nerves of steel,
He rattles like a dishpan,
And never eats a meal.

Who do I mean?
Why, Adam Link the r-o-o-bot!

He has a silvery voice,
And an iron grip,
One thing he cannot do,
Is take an ocean dip.

Who do I mean?
Why, Adam Link the r-o-o-bot!"

A silly little song, of course, and it runs on for verse after verse. Its catchy tune, I believe, is the secret of its popularity. It amuses me immensely.

Again there was applause, almost wild, and I was forced to take another bow. It had "brought down the house."

And then it was that a voice rose from the next table.

"Aw, all this fuss over a junk-man," growled a beefy man, with two empty bottles of champagne beside his elbow. "Haw, haw, that's good—junk-man! Get it?" He was speaking to his lady companion, ostensibly, but really to the whole house. "Hey, Frankenstein!" He turned to me, looking me up and down appraisingly. "Let's see—I'll offer 95c and not a penny more!" He guffawed coarsely.

A queer silence came over the room. Everybody looked around. It was an open insult. And everybody wondered, no doubt, if I had feelings that could be hurt. I did. But I said nothing. Jack started up, face livid, but I pulled him back.

The man's companion had whispered

to him. "Aw, I'm not afraid of him!" his drunken tongue boasted. "Neither of them." He staggered erect to his feet and leered at me, and in his hand he held—a can-opener. For a split instant I half rose to my feet and felt the restraining hand of Kay on my metal arms. And then my tormentor spoke again. What he said made me subside immediately. "Want to make anything of it, Frankenstein?" he said.

Frankenstein, again! Would it always hound me, all my life? I could see vague fears steal into people's faces. No matter how calmly I was accepted, there was always that lurking distrust of me. That fear that at any moment I would show the beast in me. There must be a beast in me, of course! Maybe you humans think that way because you know of the beast within yourselves. But I do not mean to be bitter.

We left. There was nothing else to do. In a taxi on the way home, I felt sunk in moodiness. Jack and Kay looked at me. Kay suddenly put her hand on my arm.

"I just want to say, Adam Link," she said earnestly, "that you're more of man than many so-called men. You have—yes, character!" She said it in a sort of awed tone, as though it had suddenly struck her. "Please don't think about what happened!"

And that is one of the memories I'll carry with me to my grave, wherever and whenever it will be. Kay Temple that day made such things easier to bear.

CHAPTER III

New Developments

I RECORD the following incident purely to show I was not a hero in any sense of the word. I had gone to the bank, to deposit several checks in my account. As I stood at the wall counter, filling out the blank, I heard a rough voice say threateningly:

"This is a stick-up! Don't move, anybody!"

I turned, stood still. Three masked bandits were advancing, with submachine guns. The few depositors threw up their hands, white-faced. One bandit barked to the clerks behind the grill to hand out money, in a hurry. The other two stood on guard, eyes shifting around, ready to shoot. Outside, at the curb, I could see a big black car with motor running, waiting for the getaway.

I hadn't made a move, since turning around. I saw the nervous, watchful eyes of the guarding men flick over me impersonally. In their tense state, they didn't see who I was. They probably took me, without thinking, as some metallic fixture of the place. I was in shadow.

I thought rapidly. Then I leaped for the bandit nearest the door, at the same time yelling "down!" at the other people. My leap was so instantaneous, so surprising, that I reached the man and wrenched his gun away before he even thought of shooting.

But the other guard sprang into action. His submachine gun coughed harshly. Bullets rattled against my middle—they always shoot for the abdomen, I understand. And that was what made it simple for me. My middle body is sheathed with thick metal plates. Bullets cannot penetrate. But bullets higher, into my eyes or facepiece, would have stopped me—even killed me.

I ran directly into the hail of bullets. Suddenly the bandit was aware at what he was shooting. His eyes opened wide, shocked. His gun dropped from nerveless fingers. He backed away, with a shriek of utter terror, and then fainted.

Now I went for the third man. He

had whirled, brought up his gun. Evidently a little harder to scare, and shrewder, he raked bullets at me. And he suddenly raised the muzzle, to shoot higher, at my head.

That was the only moment of danger. Instantly, I dove under his fire, clanked against the floor on my chest plates and slid across the tile toward him, like a metal baseball player stealing home. Before he could swing the gun down, I had grasped his ankle and jerked him off his feet. My grip also snapped his delicate ankle bones. He was through, too.

This had all happened in seconds.

Now the two men outside, in the car, hearing the shots, came to a window to take a look, faces aghast, and then jumped back. I saw I had no time to run to the door, to stop them. Instead I ran straight for the big plate-glass window, crashed through in a shower of glass. The car was just starting to move.

I thought of grasping the rear bumper, trying to hold the car back, or even overturning it, but I estimated, in lightning thought, that it would be beyond even my powers, with the engine already in gear. The weight alone would not have stopped me.

Secondly, I thought of jumping on the running-board, poking a hand through the window, and grasping the steering wheel away. But the runaway car might then smash up somewhere. I myself might end up crushed.

There was only one possibility left. I had not slowed one bit after crashing through the window. I overtook the car, just starting to zoom into second gear, and ran ahead of it. Then I turned, running backward—still faster than the car—and just stared at the two bandits in the front seat.

I figured the psychological effect correctly. Instinctively, the driver jammed on his brakes, perhaps visioning 300 pounds of metal ramming through his windshield if he ran me down.

Then it was that I jumped on the running-board, wrenched the steering wheel off its post. Completely unnerved, the two bandits shrank back, babbling for mercy, thinking I was about to tear them apart too. And so, a few minutes later, the police had all five of them.

It was nothing "heroic" on my part—you humans have a strange "hero" complex—but simply use of my machine-given powers. I vision some day a police force of robots like myself. . . .

BUT that will not be for a while. Not till I am sure others of my kind really belong in the world of man. Perhaps never. I say this, now, thinking back to what has happened.

My business went along smoothly, with Kay in charge of all details. But more and more I began to notice her watching me, surreptitiously, in a strange way. I seldom caught her at it. When I looked—I have to turn my whole head to look—she would be staring impersonally at her typewriter. But I could *feel* her eyes on me. Again I failed to reason out why she did that. She was, as I imagine women have always been to men—mystery.

Not that she was annoyingly secretive. On the contrary, she was quite open and frank in her general curiosity about me. Oftentimes, with Jack, our conversation would turn to myself. I explained as best I could what made me "tick." I told them my outlook on things. We would at times discuss humanity and social life, relative to the robot question. My very presence—the long-predicated metal man of intelligence—made that problem a looming one.

Dr. Link had cautiously destroyed his ultimate secret of energizing and bringing to life an iridium-sponge brain. He had given me the key formula. It was

locked in my mind. Therefore I, and I alone, would have the final decision to make, whether any more robots were to be made.

"Eventually," Jack said, in one of his more serious moments, "it will have to come to the government's attention. Your record will soon prove, to them, that intelligent robots will be an economic asset to civilization. And no threat to man's rule, all fantasy to the side. You, Adam, are already proof of those fundamental things."

"Not quite," I returned. "The problem goes deeper. I was fortunate in being 'brought up' by a high-minded man, Dr. Link. My open, impressionable mind was given the best possible start in civilized life. But think of a robot brought into being and trained by an unscrupulous man, or an out-and-out criminal. What would the robot be? The same!"

Kay nodded. "A basic rule. Environment molding the mind. If we had no slums, there would be no slum children." Her voice was a little tragic. "Some rise out of it; most don't—" She stopped.

"Kay did!" Jack went on, despite the girl's startled hand on his arm. "We know you well enough, Adam, for you to hear this. Kay had two strikes on her from the start—the slums and her beauty. She survived them both. But her sister didn't. Her sister—"

It was a tragic story, and I knew the reason now for Kay's somber moments. I was shocked at the revelation of slum life, poverty, maladjustment, side by side with a thriving mechanical civilization.

"I've been wondering what to do with my money," I said, when Jack was done. "Now I know. We're going to buy up slum property, tear down the buildings, and erect new modern ones!" Already my rapid thoughts were outlining the project.

Kay's eyes were shining, through tears. Her hand touched my arm.

"I don't see you as a robot any more, Adam!" she exclaimed. "I see you as a man! You have character, personality, just like anyone else. You are like a man who is big and strong—and gentle. You have kindly eyes, sympathetic lips, a strong chin." She was looking at me with half-closed eyes. "You have a grave, boyish face, a shock of unruly hair, seldom combed. Your hands are big, thick-fingered, but so very gentle! And when you smile—you often do, I know—it is like a warm sun breaking through clouds!"

Jack and I were both a little startled.

But Jack's face lighted up with a wondering fascination. "You know, Kay," he whispered, "you've described him to a T!"

And after that, I felt more than ever a human being. I knew that in their eyes I was no longer Adam Link, robot, but Adam Link—*man!*

THE slum-clearance project knit us three still more closely together. Jack quit his paper, where he had often editorialized against the city's laxness, and became manager of activities. We could not clean up everything, but we would do as much as we could. My money—it had reached over a half million—poured into the venture. Firetrap, vermin-infested tenements began to go down, foundations up.

Tom Link, my "cousin," came from his eastern law office to help with legal matters. I have forgotten to mention Tom. He hadn't suddenly lost all interest in me, after his losing court battle, or I in him. It was just that he had gone to his new position, before the date of my near-execution, unable to bear being around for that bitter event. We had exchanged letters steadily, after my pardon. Now he came to help us.

"Adam Link!" he greeted me, stepping off the train. It was all he could say for the moment. I couldn't say anything.

Later, the four of us talked.

"How did you ever get that testimony out of the housekeeper?" Tom asked Jack, without jealousy. "I tried to get her to remember separate sounds, in the witness chair, but she stubbornly claimed she couldn't."

"It was simple enough," grinned Jack. "Talking to her at her home, I kept my voice loud. She was annoyed. I explained that I knew she was half deaf. That got her! Sometimes little personal things like that sharpen people's minds. To prove her perfect hearing, she *had* to remember that she had heard Adam's footsteps first—whether she really did or not! You see?"

"You missed your calling!" Tom meant it. He turned to me. "I knew neither my uncle nor I was wrong about you, Adam. You're proving your worth. I'm—well, I'm proud to be your cousin!"

Tom had to leave a week later, but promised to be back oftener. He had cleared away a legal tangle, and snipped much red tape for us.

BUT in all our activity, Jack, Kay and I still found time to relax and have fun.

Sports appealed to all of us. I quickly found tennis to my liking. But it was some time before I could learn to release my strength in normal quantities. At the very first try, I struck the tennis ball with the wood of the racket so violently that both ball and racket crumpled. Toning my blows down, I still had to learn control. Many a ball I knocked out of sight. My game steadied at last, soon to the point where Jack could not win a game. In fact, not even one volley.

He gave up, but one day grinningly contrived to have me play with a certain young friend with an inflated ego. Jack told me to give it all I had. I did. I won every service game on straight aces. I won opponent's service games by bullet-like returns that he never touched. His ego, to Jack's delight, was properly deflated.

Golf was next. It was a while before I could learn to strike the little ball at all. And longer to keep from driving it, when I did hit it, three greens beyond. But putting I never mastered. It takes a little more quiet, subtle control than I am capable of. I am good only for fast movement and blows of strength.

Horseback riding and swimming, of course, I could do nothing with, though Kay and Jack loved both. I don't think horseback riding would be any sort of thrill to me at all, since I can outrun any horse. Swimming—yes, I am laughing, too, at the mere thought of a robot trying that.

One of my chief delights was driving. I had bought a speedy, powerful car and would sometimes drive it over a hundred miles an hour down wide highways. The feel of a powerful motor thrills me. I feel a vague kinship with it. It is perhaps the only psychological twist I have, away from the human. I think of every engine, motor, and power plant as a "brother," less fortunately equipped than myself with an integrated center of control. But you can hardly understand. I will say no more.

I had a bad accident once, in my driving. My own driving, frankly, is faultless. I have instantaneous reflexes, perfect control, absolute timing. But other drivers are human. One car passed another just ahead of me, both coming my way. I jammed on my foot-brakes so forcefully that the connecting rods snapped. The emergency brake alone was inadequate. Our two cars would

smash violently together head-on!

To save the other man, I twisted my wheel, careened off the road, turned turtle twice, and ended up against a tree. The impact was thunderous, shoving the engine off its block, and there was an explosion and fire all around. I had crashed through the windshield, and against the tree, in the middle of the burning wreck.

"Good God!" moaned the man who had caused this, running up after stopping at the roadside. "Good God—whoever was in that car is—"

He couldn't finish. He meant to say: "crushed to pulp and burned to a cinder."

At that moment I stepped out, a little sooty and with a wide dent in my front plate, but otherwise unharmed. The man looked once, shock in his face, and fled. But I later received a letter from him, after he had realized who I was, offering to pay for my car. I thanked him, refusing to accept. He had in the first place had the good grace to stop after the accident.

I unwittingly caused another car to run off the road once, though no one was hurt. The driver glanced casually at me while I was passing. Startled and unnerved at seeing an unhuman creature driving, he lost control. After that, I rode with curtains on the side windows, and confined my sight-seeing to the front windshield.

CHAPTER IV

Kay Makes a Confession

I SEE that I have been digressing again. I know why I am doing it. It is because I am almost afraid to finish what I started to write. But I must get to it, or this account will ramble evasively without end.

I must get back to Kay Temple and Jack Hall.

Not very long ago, we three as usual went out together, to a movie. I forget the movie. I forget everything except that for the first time, Jack seemed annoyed at my presence. I had seen his hand, in the dark theatre, steal toward hers, grasp it. She glanced quickly at me, then at Jack, slightly shaking her head, and withdrawing her hand. It was my presence that prompted her, not wishing to isolate me from a three-way companionship. Kay Temple is that thoroughbred sort. She wouldn't hurt the feelings of anyone—even a metal man's.

That night I spoke to Jack. We had dropped Kay off at her place. Jack and I, I might mention, had had rooms together all this time. He had insisted on it.

"Jack," I began, and for once my words came haltingly. I didn't know how much to intrude on his privacy. "About you and Kay—"

It was as though I had touched off a fuse.

"Never mind about that!" Jack snapped back, almost explosively. "Keep your damned tin nose out of—"

And then he changed, just as quickly. "Forgive me, Adam, old boy," he apologized. "My nerves. Overwork, I guess."

I watched him while he sat at the edge of his bed, dangling a sock in his hand. He was miserable. Suddenly he looked up.

"Adam, you're my friend. Why should I hide it from you? I love Kay. I met her in a restaurant. Waitress. I set my cap for her, day after day. At last I got a date. I thought—well, never mind, but first thing I knew . . . bang! My swelled head changed to a swelled heart. That was over a year ago. I heard her story, admired her all the more, wanted to help her. She refused, of course, that way, though I wouldn't have taken advantage."

The words rushed out now, welling from within, and it hardly seemed the same debonair, cheerful, semi-cynical Jack I had known.

"I kept seeing her. I wanted to marry her. I proposed. She told me to wait, till we were both sure. And that's what has kept me on edge, Adam. I think she cares for me, but I'm not sure. I'm just not sure. That's the way it is right now, with me still waiting—and wondering. She, holding off for some reason. It's not another man. She would tell me instantly if it were that."

He was looking at me, then, with a half-smile.

"But I guess you don't understand things like that, Adam. You don't know how lucky you are, old boy, not to know the pangs of love and all that goes with it. At least when it turns out wrong. Damn, I wish *I* was a robot!"

He said such things disarmingly, without offense. But still he stirred a vague unrest in me. I had known most of the emotions you humans have—anger, fear, dismay, sorrow, quiet joys. But what about this mighty, mysterious thing called "love"? Love, more than anything, as I knew technically, was tied with strong bonds to the biological body. I had no biological body. Therefore I could never know love. Man I might be in all things save that. In that I was neuter. It was a world barred from me.

I tried to grasp how Jack must feel. Just what sort of emotional pain did he feel? But I couldn't know. I could only judge, from the smoldering ache deep in his eyes, that he was suffering in some strange, sweet-sad way.

Jack laughed suddenly, still looking at me.

"Say, Adam, you'd have it easy. Just make another robot, give it the feminine viewpoint, and she'd have to take you, with no other choice!"

He laughed a little wildly, and slipped into bed.

I went to my room where, as usual, I prepared to spend the night reading. For a few minutes, I heard smothered chucklings from behind Jack's closed door. I felt glad that his sense of humor had rescued him from his downcast mood. But somehow, what he had said wasn't at all humorous for me. I did less reading that night than thinking—and queer thinking it was!

A FEW days later, it happened.

We had enlarged our offices, and Kay now had a separate office in which to work. We also had a boy for the filing. I had just taken care of one client, that day, sending him to Kay for a bill, and was interviewing another.

"Here are the data, Mr. Link," said this man, technology manager of a food-products cannery. "Is there any way we can speed up our photo-electric process, which spots and takes out bad peas? We want faster production. The photo-electric people say it can't be done. But I thought perhaps you—"

I looked at the pages of data, diagrams, complete mechanical outlay of highly-complicated devices. I absorbed it all within ten minutes. I took a scratch pad and scrawled figures, formulae, for another five minutes. I wrote a final formula on a separate sheet and handed it to him.

"Here it is," I said. "You can increase the rate 25 per cent by using a piezo-electric crystal in the secondary transformer circuit."

The man was amazed. The solution I had given clicked in his trained mind. "By God, that's it!" he exclaimed. He looked at me wonderingly. "You've given me in fifteen minutes, by proxy, what might have taken months of experiment and research. Adam Link—"

I cut off his enthusiastic eulogies. I

had had so much of it from others. Besides, for the past eleven minutes, only half my mind had been on that problem. The other half had been on what I faintly heard going on in Kay's office.

The previous client was still there, though he must have his bill by now. Like many another man, he had lingered, attracted by Kay's loveliness. I barely made out some words of his. He was pressing her for a date which she had politely and patiently refused six times already.

I urged my own visitor out, told my office boy to keep the door to the outer waiting room closed for the time being, and stepped into Kay's office.

The man, a big, broad-shouldered, moneyed executive, was leaning over her desk. He was handsome, and had probably succeeded with many a girl by refusing to be rebuffed at the first try.

"Now look here, gorgeous," he was saying, in a half-wheedling, half-arrogant way, "you don't know who you're turning down—"

"I think she does," I said, moving close. "And she could turn down a dozen like you, without any loss. May I ask you to leave—immediately?"

He left—immediately—for the simple reason that my hand on his shoulder was propelling him out of the door. I gave him an extra squeeze at the last, cutting off his shouted threats to sue me for assault.

I WENT back to Kay. "I'm sorry you were annoyed," I said. "I should have come sooner." Then, to lighten the moment, I added, "I really can't blame the man, though, with a girl like you—"

"Adam!"

She just said the one word, staring at me in a strange way. It was the way she had been staring at me, watching me, surreptitiously, for long months. But now her gaze was open, revealed. And I was suddenly frightened at what I saw in her eyes. I strode out.

But Kay followed me to my desk.

"Adam," she said, "I must tell you. I—"

I have no lungs or human-like throat with which to cough. But at times, a slight static charge issues from my interior, very much like a cough. I conjured one up now, with a swift mental order to my electrical distributor. It interrupted her.

"Kay," I returned rapidly. "You're a bit upset, I think. Don't you want to take the afternoon off?"

"No, I want to talk to you. I must!"

"Then remember," I returned rather gruffly, "that I'm a robot. A metal being, not a man of flesh and blood." I looked at her for a moment. "Kay, let's talk about Jack. He's a fine, young man, Kay. He has character. He—"

This time she interrupted me.

"So do you have character, Adam. I described you once—big and strong, grave boyish face, and gentle, tenderhearted. Yes, you have more heart than many men I've known. It is a person's mind that counts, not his physical body. Your mind, Adam, is that of a great man, and a good man. I love you!"

She said it quite naturally, quite calmly. She wasn't hysterical, or wrought-up. She was in perfect command of herself. Her eyes were steady, but there was also a glow in them. A glow that seemed like a blinding light to me, and I had to turn my eyes away.

"Kay, this is sheer nonsense—"

"No." Her voice was clear, soft. She came close to me, placed a hand on my shiny chromium shoulder. "No, Adam. That's the way it is. I feel more strongly for you than for any man I've ever met, even poor Jack—"

What mad, incredible scene was

this? I was confused, stunned, though I had been vaguely prepared. My mirrored eyes turned back to Kay Temple, drank in her beauty.

And at that moment, I hated my mechanical body. I never had before. I longed to take Kay in arms of flesh and blood and know the secret joys of human love. I hated my metal body now, despite all its strength and power, and lack of sickness, weariness and the other human ailments. I was only living half a life. I could only stand at the portal of greater things and glance within, never to enter. I could, in time, have the greatest minds of Earth look up to me, fawn on me as a giant of intellect. But I could never have a woman, not the poorest and meanest, look on me with eyes of love—

And yet, *what about Kay Temple!*

My mind staggered. This was madness. I arose, shaking off her hand, and stood at the window, with my back to her. I was actually afraid my metal face would show emotions I felt!

"Jack is waiting for you, Kay."

I said it expressionlessly. I meant it for a rebuff. Almost as a gentle insult, scorning what she had revealed, not even thanking her.

She seemed not to take it that way. "I cared for Jack, still do. I might have married him, but for you." Her voice was still clear, rational.

Poor Jack! It was I, then, who unwittingly stood between him and his happiness. He had saved me from extinction, solely out of goodness. And now I, in return, stood on his heart with two feet of cold, brutal metal.

What could I say? What could I do? And then it was so ridiculously simple that I laughed within myself. Almost, I had forgotten that I *was* a robot, not a man.

"But Kay," I said, "granting all that you have said, what more is there to say or do? I am still a creation of wheels and wires, not the boyish-faced human you picture me as. I'm still metal, not flesh!"

Again I felt her hand on my shoulder, a sixth sense serving in place of feeling, for I have no sense of touch.

"Adam," she whispered in my ear, "it is only the mind that counts, not the body. I want to be with you, always. I want to—"

"Kay," I said slowly, and I knew then that if it had been possible for my metal and string throat to sob, I would have sobbed—"Kay, I've got to go now. I've an appointment—" The lie was absurd, and I knew that she knew it. Kay made all my appointments for me. She had looked after me like a mother . . . or—the thought swept me with a new wave of anguish—like a sweetheart.

But I turned and left. Left her sitting there looking after me with her hands folded limply on the desk. I knew without having to turn that she watched me leave, and there were tears in her eyes. They were tears that I should have been able to shed instead.

Then I got into my car and drove out to the quiet of the country, where I could think. For once even the metal meshed gears of Adam Link, Robot, felt the necessity of solitude. . . .

HOURS have passed since I wrote this account. My mind is made up, though I know that it was made up long ago. There are some things that I realize are as inevitable for me as death is to humans. I know what I must do, and I am doing it.

Here on the dark teakwood table of my sitting room lie two letters and a telegram which will go before I do.

The telegram is to my cousin Tom:

Dear Tom: Tomorrow's mail will bring you an accounting of all my money

and holdings. I am going away somewhere alone—where not even you must know—and I may not come back. I want you to take this money and put it into a trust fund for Kay and Jack. For the rest I trust your judgment. I am grateful for everything you've done for me, and I hope that circumstances may some day allow us to meet again. Good-by—

The first letter—

Dear Jack: Perhaps Kay is near you as you read this letter. Wherever she is, go to her immediately, take her to City Hall. Marry her! Do that if you have to gag and bind her. Deep down in her heart there can be no other man for her but you. And to both of you, my deepest . . . love.

The other letter goes into my diary, together with this account, locked in vaults that are not to be opened for a year after my "death or destruction."

It reads: These may be the last recorded thoughts of Adam Link. I am going away to a place that I have owned secretly for some time, a place that I have never mentioned and will not now. I may return, but whether in a year or twenty I cannot say. To that end I have arranged for all the supplies necessary to my existence to be brought, by devious and circumspect methods, to what will be my hermitage until I know better what I must do.

I know at last my full capabilities—and my weaknesses. The capacity for emotion, rooted in me by my creator, has again betrayed me, and this time with me it has added another victim. I fervently and devoutly hope that everything will turn out for the best. Unless I can return to life among humans without running the dangers of hurting them, perhaps it is best for me never to return.

Even now, you can see how humanly machine parts of me function. For there are implications here of suicide—and I admit them. I have thought of it. The cliffs and treacherous mountain passes have beckoned me before, promising me peace and tranquility if I would yield and jump into their embrace. But I don't know. I don't know. There is so much good that I can do. The harm must never happen again. I must never tell another half truth like the one in which I told Jack that there can never be another man for Kay but him. Not a *man*. . . .

I am going away then, and I will not come back until Adam Link, the Robot, the machine—is truly a machine again.

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The Strange Death of Richard Sefton

By CARL SELWYN

Sefton welcomed death as an end to his agony. But he woke to a new world where all the living had died

WHEN he died there was no weeping. Neither friends nor relatives gathered at his side, for there were none. The big blond youth made no move to stay the tightening hand that clutched his heart; he had felt its chill touch so many times before. The pounding in his temples and the roaring in his ears, to which he had become so accustomed in these many months, grew louder. And then it ceased. And, quickly, as a scarlet film floated across his eyes and his mind relaxed into darkness, he knew; and he was glad. The black void swirled to pure white, a sinking, drifting, lulling white in boundless space. Then nothing . . .

The tall impassive nurse beside the bed saw the hand of the youth slowly slide across his chest, rest lifelessly at his side. She dropped the large scrapbook of newspaper clippings, his, and marked the time in her journal. She sighed, read again the reference notes:

"Richard Sefton, 22, fair, six-one, 190 lbs. Airplane accident, May 24. Increasing hypertension, cardiac region. Prognosis negative. Died—August 14,—six-twenty-eight P.M."

The gaunt, spotless woman tucked the notebook in her pocket, pulled the sheet over the face of the statue-like body upon the bed and left the room, closing the door softly.

A rushing wave of sound crashed over the silence of white nothingness.

Everywhere Sefton looked, Death met his gaze

A flash of light swept along and suddenly awareness surged through him.

Richard Sefton brushed his hands across his face. He opened his eyes and over the golden light streaming in at the window, memories from far away passed through his mind—the wind as a trim ship threatened the stars; an instrument panel in the dark solitude—

He shifted his eyes to the place about him. And slowly he saw that it was the same room he had left.

Richard Sefton rolled over upon his face and clinched his hands in agony. He had not noticed the silence. But then, slowly he tensed, rolled carefully on his side, listening to the sound of his heart. It was smooth, calmly functioning to its task. A strange long-forgotten strength flowed through his body with each steady beat, a tingling of mind and muscle.

He raised a tentative hand to the bed post. Almost afraid to move lest the charm vanish, he swung up slowly and sat upon the bed looking at his bare feet, moving then, and he smiled.

The pulse of life again in his veins. He could feel a suffusion of strength with each beat of his heart. But how? Why? He surveyed his sturdy legs, strong hands and arms, felt his smooth ruggedly handsome face. He needed a shave. He looked with approval at his blue pajamas and smiled again. He had jokingly told them he wanted to die in blue pajamas.

Then stealthily there came an eery chilling thought—perhaps *this* was death! But the chill vanished as it came. Death? If this was Death it was better than life as it had been. He flung a pillow across the room. It hit the door with a crash and plopped to the floor, with a louder sound than there should have been.

"Do I live again?" he whispered. His voice echoed dully in the strangely silent building. He left the bed, stood upright upon the cool floor. He shouted for the nurse. There was no answer.

"Hello," he called, thrilling to the growing power of his lungs. "Hello out there! Where is everybody?" The words thundered in the room.

Sefton stepped to the door. The soft padding of his feet thumped into the uncanny stillness. He flung the door open.

The crumpled body of his nurse lay at his feet.

HER head was twisted aside and from a face that was ghastly calm stared wide, expressionless eyes. In the awkward, clownish pose of death, one arm flung stiffly outward, the other bent beneath her, she lay as she had fallen—as a puppet falls when the strings are suddenly relaxed.

Sefton bent and felt for a pulsebeat. There was none!

A waft of breeze idly fingered the curtains at the far window but there was no movement in the buildings across the avenue and from the street below came no sound. And the breeze carried the subtle smell of burning wood.

Sefton shouted. Only the booming echoes of his call returned. A formless fear crept coldly along his spine, but quickly he went back to his room, found his clothes in a closet and dressed.

The sound of his tread again reverberated along the passage.

He jabbed the elevator button, glanced back at the still figure before his door. How had she died? Why this deafening silence? The walls must be quite soundproof; but he had not noticed it before. And something was burning.

Sefton waited with growing impatience, pushed the buzzer again but there was no expected whirr of ma-

chinery. This was the third floor. He ran to the door, bounded down the steps. At the landings there came no noise from the other floors. Running down the last flight, he pushed the door aside and burst into the lobby.

On the deep rug sprawled the body of the elevator operator, a crumpled thing dropped carelessly. The unmistakable lifelessness needed no proving. Sefton stepped past the body, glanced about the large room. Through the doors to the street was only the dying light and a few parked cars. There were no passersby.

He stood on the balls of his feet, tense and listening. The great stillness was a monstrous sound in itself. It was as in the early morning before the world has awakened with its little noises, sounds of life. But it was twilight. The sun had dipped quietly into a bloody horizon.

Scattered about, as paper upon the lawn of a park, were the prostrate, motionless forms of many human beings. They were strewn in grotesque, fallen positions, unmoved as they had fallen, as if cut down by a great scythe sweeping across the city—as far as the eye could see.

The smell of fire was strong in his nostrils. Sefton stood fixed, hypnotized by the horror in the weird afterglow. Clouds of white smoke were drifting skyward in the gloom. About two miles to the north fire was advancing hungrily across the city.

Sefton covered his face with his hands, struggling not for understanding, but for control. His body was cold and limp with a nerveless calm. The world before his eyes was dead. All that had lived had died and fallen upon the pavement. The streets were an ancient long-sealed tomb. The ghoulish breeze twirled a bit of silk from a dead girl's hair. Sefton started as a new straw hat shivered madly, scurried across the pavement and slid to a stop against a taxi. The cab driver was slumped over his wheel, as were hundreds of slouching drivers in the frozen stream of traffic.

He noticed a young woman, smartly dressed, half in the gutter, her skirt shimmering in the wind along bare white thighs. Two cars were locked at the intersection, a wreck of shattered glass and twisted steel. A policeman leaned crazily against a lamp-post at the corner. A passing gust of wind flung the cap from his head. Suddenly his weight shifted and the body fell heavily upon the sidewalk.

There was a little boy nearby, blue suit and blue bow tie. In his outstretched hand was crushed an ice cream cone. Sefton stiffened.

The cream was barely melted. In a hot August evening! He glanced about wildly, arising. There was a cigarette in the gutter. It was still burning! How long had it been? Only minutes —seconds!

SUDDENLY he heard a slithering from above, instinctively sprang back. The sack-like body of a man plopped to the pavement before him, a shapeless thing; and no blood flowed. Deep in the peculiar workings of the human mind flashed the thought that this was happening all over the town. Death had struck as they leaned from a window. *Rigor mortis* drew the balance forward and they plunged down.

He whirled about and fled, aimlessly, in unreasoning flight from the terror that lay everywhere upon the city. But the littered streets had bad running and the silent, scattered reminders were inescapable. He halted, breathing hard.

What should he do? What could he do?

Was he the one who was dead and

this an illusion of death? Was this a personal hell created by a laughing infinity for his distress? It could not be —in its very unreality all was much too real. There was nothing disturbed but the life and its sounds of living. And yet. . . . Was this stifling silence beating within *closed* ears?

Sefton saw against a towering skyscraper a crashed airplane, glistening redly, a massive liner hanging from a cornice. Broken swaying figures dangled from the twisted hull.

"Gas from an enemy air fleet?" he asked aloud. The papers had been screaming of war. But why had not rescue come? Did fumes still cling to the land and it could not be approached? "But why am I immune? How did I escape?" The questions were caught by the wind, hurled against the night in whispering echoes. The only answer—

A strange thrill leapt in Sefton, quick terror rising to panic. Were they *all* dead—everyone—everywhere—but he! Was he the last man on earth—the last *living* thing?

Suddenly his wandering eyes caught a dim movement in the next block. A vague form moved in the shadows of a building, passed into the glaring light of a shopwindow.

The figure moved slowly across the street. It was a woman walking there.

She was tall, a beautiful woman wrapped in a shining scarlet robe. Her feet were bare and unclad limbs moved below the short folds of the brilliant cloth. Sefton stared, unable to move. Was Death a woman in red that walked the night, a ghostly spectre that strolled among her dead in lethal beauty?

Impulsively he cupped his hands and shouted.

She turned, peered long in the dim light. Then her legs crumpled beneath her and she dropped to the pavement.

His eye upon the distinguishing gleam of crimson amid the other still forms, Sefton dashed to the spot where she had fallen.

The woman lay upon the sidewalk, a bright costume robe wrapped about the gentle curves of a perfect body. She lay unmoving as the rest but within the open throat of cloak, Sefton saw the rise and fall of her full delicate breasts.

With but the single thought that here was another living creature, he knelt and raised her in his arms, smoothing the black tangle of hair from her face.

She moved slightly in his arms. Her long dark lashes trembled and she looked up into his face. She gazed at him, then tightly closed her eyes again.

"Do you live?" she whispered. He could not speak. She stared at him with frightened misty blue eyes. "Why are you here?"

"I know nothing—only what I see about us," Sefton finally answered.

She attempted to rise and he lifted her to her feet. She clung to him weakly.

"Where can we go?" She tried not to look at the scene of slaughter about them. Sefton glanced about helplessly. Everywhere were the bodies in the street. The glow of flame was wild, a growing thunder. Shadows flickered; above, a cloud of black-red smoke. A breath of wind was hot against his face. He made out the quay, the harbor glistening in the reddened dusk. Vaguely, he motioned there.

HIS arm about her shoulder, Sefton led the girl down the avenue. Despite the jammed automobiles, they found it easier walking in the street. But she stumbled beside him and silently he swung her up into his arms.

She held to him tightly and with an occasional sob. He felt again the soft warmth of her body and thrilled to her

nearness and beauty. Even then the thought came to him—the almost certain knowledge that he was dead. And so, too, was this girl. Quietly, unthinking, he asked, "Who were you?"

"Were?"

He mumbled something, and the girl gave him her name: Marcia Durette.

Dark shadows fell across the piers when they reached the harbor. Liners, tugs, tankers, smaller craft, were moored there in darkness and silence. The rising breeze struggled against the canopy of smoke, and the city uptown was a silhouette of shimmering flame now whipped safely northward by the wind.

Sefton strode to a corner of the wharf, gently let his light burden down. He knelt beside her.

She looked about them and shuddered as she saw the bodies in the shadows, here too. She turned slowly to him.

"How could you, too, have escaped?" she asked.

"I don't know." He was afraid to talk yet, to tell her what he knew. Instead he told her of the hospital and the nurse, now a crumpled thing in the lonely hall, the passing into darkness, the awakening light and the scene of madness he had discovered.

"I can tell little more," she said. "I am—" She shivered. "I was a member of the water carnival, the Aquacade uptown. We'd been playing in the Silver Palace for eight months. I remember the orchestra playing softly as I went into my dive from the high platform. I remember there was nothing unusual when I plunged into the water. But when I came up the theater was silent—terribly, strangely silent! There was no applause! I wondered if I had done something wrong. Then the water cleared from my eyes and I saw several of the chorus—lying upon the tile at the edge of the pool. I climbed to the stage and saw—" She stopped, closed her eyes as if the picture etched upon her mind was too vivid for description. Then with face set, eyes far upon the water, she began again.

"The flood lights were still on, everything was as it had always been each time for so many performances. But the theater was hushed and—thousands of staring eyes—were beyond the footlights. I remember screaming—hearing the awful echo. I must have fainted! I came to half mad! I must have picked up this wrap. Wandered out of the hall. I don't know where—"

Sefton held her in his arms and his lean biceps flexed with strength, strength, he felt, that might in life have conquered the earth—for this woman. But were they dead? There were other signs—the girl shivering beside him, as if she were exhausted from the long horror of her experience. She wore only the light wrap over her scanty swimming suit. He tucked the robe about her, held her closely. Despite his thoughts he could not keep his eyes from the exquisite fineness of her face. He felt her eyes search his and he sank within himself, looked deeply and turned away.

The sound of an airplane came thundering out of the distance.

IT came from over the city. Sefton whirled. It was headed for the sea, toward them.

He arose slowly, eyes straining into the flame-smeared glow. Marcia's hand tightened upon his arm. It *was* a plane! It must be! The hum of the motors—this nightmare was ending! Whatever had happened, rescue was coming at last!

"There it is!"

It came out of the smoke, silver moonlight bathing its wings.

"Seaplane!"

Sefton started to shout. The plane was hurtling toward them, low over the buildings above the quay. They could not be seen. He must signal. At the other end of the wharf was a big searchlight frame, dark. Sefton dashed to it.

The plane was overhead now, zooming toward the sea. Sefton grabbed the switch. It clicked down.

Dead. The power was off. The plane flashed out over the water in the ghastly moonlight, and the drone of the motors grew faint as distance swallowed it. He turned slowly away, deadened to the ache of despair.

Marcia gently placed her hand upon his arm.

"But there *are* others!" she said. "They will come back—or more will come."

Sefton nodded. Others would come —other dreams, pictures like shadows, coming to the dead in the still delirium.

He said, "And when they come—whatever happens, or has happened—I *have* known you. . . ."

She said nothing, looking at him, and he wondered if she had heard. He turned away and looked out over the water. The tide was slapping heavily against the bobbing sides of a small craft tied at the dock. It was a speedboat and on its compact little cabin was a spotlight. Again doubt seized him and with it he acted. He had to do something, to *know*. He jumped down to the deck.

"This spot won't need city power. I'd better fix up some sort of signal for the next ones." He felt for the button through the cabin window. A white rod of light shot over the glistening gray water. He climbed back to the wharf.

"But why did that plane head out to sea?" he said thoughtfully.

"Perhaps—" Marcia began. She stopped, listening—

Sefton leaped to the cruiser, snatched at the light. The thin beam spun weirdly in the sky.

The plane came into view, high this time and more slowly. The ship passed over them, in a moment filled with panic— It circled wide, then came around in a long spiral. The light had been seen!

It was a trim ship, silver in the dim light. A tri-motored seaplane. It came over low, circling twice, its wings dipped in recognition. It came in again, spanked the water and bounced across the harbor. With motors roaring, it pulled slowly up to the docks, halted at a landing.

Sefton and the girl ran across the rough boards. They reached the landing as lights came on in the little plane's cabin.

The door opened. A head peered out, silhouetted against the light inside.

"Throw a rope!" a man's feeble voice cried. The man stepped down to the pontoon as Sefton glanced about for something to cast. He found a mooring line. The moon glistened on the hull of the plane and the long pontoons.

An old man stood there, waiting for the rope.

HE climbed up, small, bent and haggard, wispy and sparse white hair trailing in the ocean breeze. He wore a dingy gray smock, the kind doctors wear, and his hands were encased in rubber gloves which he removed slowly as he stared at them. His old eyes were filled with tears but whether from slipstream or emotion Sefton could not guess. The face was long and aristocratic beneath the wrinkles, unusual for one of his diminutive stature.

"You—the ship!" He seemed to find his voice. "Not everybody! It *was* localized!"

"What happened!" cried Sefton. Now they could know.

The stranger sank weakly down to a piling, covered his face with his hands. Then he looked up suddenly.

"What happened? Yes, what happened. I have been too busy to think." He stared at them with wild, haunted eyes. "And I could have done something—I know I could! But did I have time? Did I have time!"

"Please," said Sefton softly. "We will be all right now. They will come soon."

"They?" He started up. "The ship? Did I tell you?"

"What ship, sir? Rescue?"

"Rescue!" He arose and turned to the water, whirled back to them. "Yes! Rescue! It was not widespread—could not have been!" There was a note of uncertainty in his words, as though he were trying to convince himself. "The ship—I sighted it from over the city. It is out several miles—coming this way, moving. It should be here soon—if there is life aboard—"

Sefton grasped the thin old shoulders.

"What has happened here — these people in the streets? The city is dead!"

The old man grew quieter. "It is too much for now. The ship will be in soon. Then we can know—for certain. But I have covered hundreds of miles around the city. In every direction. And there is no living thing in that radius. I saw it come—this evening from my laboratory. A visitor planet? Meteorite? Speck of dust? I do not know. But it came—and passed—leaving death, everywhere here. I have radioed, every wave. No amateur or government responds. The ether is dead. I thought the *world* was dead. But a ship is coming. And I find you here."

"You saw *what* coming?"

The weary man seemed to look through them, into the great tomb and the fire and beyond. His eyes narrowed and he winced as if gripped by raw horror.

"It was about 6:30 this evening," he said, apparently unaware of them and of his own voice. "I remember. I had a camera trap set for a planetoid and I entered my laboratory a few minutes before them. As I approached my telescope, I noticed a faint tinge of ozone in the air. I thought little of it at the time. Upon developing the film, I found the dash of white where it had caught the planetoid's trail—but there was also a long even line, diagonally across the plate, the perfect path of something—*where nothing should have been.* I reset the trap to check on it. I waited five minutes, developed the plate again. There was a dot signifying the proper position of the planetoid, and nothing more. Something had definitely passed there—at a speed beyond comprehension!"

THE old man was far away, reliving the things of which he spoke.

"It had transversed my plate—focused upon billions of miles—in a tiny fraction of a second. I hurried out to call the near-by observatory—to see if they had also detected its passing." He closed his eyes and was silent.

"I found my assistants in the next room—dead. I did not know what to think. Then I saw my batteries! My row of lead cells along the wall! Covered with yellow-green leakage, dripping on the floor. I don't know why—perhaps it was some premonition—but I examined those batteries. And they were completely discharged, every one of them. It had been no faulty connection, and they were new cells recently charged. What could it have been? It could have been but one thing else. My

years of experimentation had taught me that. It must have been—radioactivity.

"But from where? There was nothing of such power in my laboratory. Even so, the room was thickly insulated with xanite. There was nothing of such power on earth! I thought of the strange flash across my photographic plate. It had been radiation, yes—but not from laboratory, not from the earth—from something beyond and infinitesimally more powerful than anything we know. And the shield of xanite had saved me. . . ."

Sefton waited but he seemed to have finished.

"A radiation," Sefton said. "And its effect—?"

The man motioned toward the burning city, the bodies upon the wharf.

"Life is but a chemical action," he said. "Even as my storage cells were discharged, so were the functions of man. The smallest weight of radium—the most dangerous radiation we know—is highly injurious to human flesh. It violently affects an electroscope. It will ruin a photographic film. A vast amount, even at a great distance . . .? It is proved."

"*Xanite!*" Marcia exclaimed. "You mentioned xanite. Protection."

"It is a product of xanol, the nature of which," said the old man, "is still unknown. It is the only protection for intense radiation, having replaced former lead insulation. I am the first to use it extensively for this purpose. There are other commercial uses." He rose to his feet unsteadily. "But how did you escape?"

THE question caught Sefton unexpectedly. Escape? *Had he escaped?* He stood silent. For that matter, had any of—

"Xanol!" Marcia cried out. "I just remembered! Xanol—in the pool. At the Aquacade where I worked! They use it to color the water under the lights—"

"It *is* used as a pigment," said the man. "Yes. I suppose it could. Even in a weak solution it retains its protective powers. You were there—beneath the liquid? My child, you have much for which to be thankful."

There were tears in her blue eyes as she turned to Sefton.

"But you," she said, "you were at the hospital—"

And still Sefton said nothing. What was that? All three looked out into the blackness over the water. What was that sound?

A voice was growing out of the sea. A sound that was slowly filling the harbor.

Lights! Far across the bay! They were approaching. Coming in from the sea, lights like a carnival of varicolored dots against the black ocean. And echoing upon itself from the city, the horn of a great liner coming in.

The distance narrowed and for a moment the three stood as if in a trance. Suddenly Sefton took the girl's arm. His left hand held the old man's cold palm. Cold! He recoiled from the thought. But holding each, he walked across the wharf toward the shore.

The ship came on. Again the horn burst out—

And then, senselessly, horribly—the massive ship was shattering its way into the concrete sea wall and the wharf, piling itself into a huge mass of wreckage, its hull torn open, its stacks falling, and the ground trembled as waves of sound like an artillery barrage smashed against their ears. . . .

It was quiet now. Only the hiss of steam as yellow flame licked up from the twisted steel skeleton that had plunged into the wharf. And still no sound of any living thing had

come through the still air. . . .

Marcia was sobbing at Sefton's side. He led her to the little park overlooking the harbor, the old man following silently behind them.

They found a bench and sat down and no one spoke for several minutes. The silver green elm trees, between the wall of fire from the dock and the sheen of red from the city, were quite restful.

After a time Sefton said to the old man, "Who are you?"

"Roger DeValgre."

Sefton remembered. DeValgre was one of the greatest names in cosmic radiation. What had he done? Something about radioactivity and biological effects. He had forgotten the theory.

"The ship, Doctor?" Sefton said. "They were all dead, as here. Weren't they?"

"I could not tell when I sighted it. I thought something might have saved them. But they were dead hands that held it to its course."

He added, "It must have been world wide. Against every futile hopeless hope I felt, my calculations before I left reasoned that."

The girl spoke: "Everyone—dead!"

"Every animal organism. I knew it when I figured the passage of the thing. And when I saw my animals, even the lowest on microscope slides; and when I found my assistants in the next room. My laboratory is on one of the upstate lakes. I searched there and from here in a wide radius. No thing lives."

"Plant life?" said Sefton, quietly.

"I've made a cursory examination and I doubt if plant cells were affected. This passing thing from outer space—whatever it was—was of an element unknown here. It will probably never be known as it continued its journey to further reaches away from us. It must have been entirely neuropathic—affecting only the nervous system. I judge this primarily from its instantaneous effect.

"I mentioned what happened to my batteries. Nerve currents too are an electrochemical action. The radiation doubtless affected everything possessing even rudimentary neurons. Did you notice the dead fish in the harbor—the gulls floating lifelessly? Even the flies are gone. Perhaps even plant life will die, I don't know . . . Who does?"

"I do." Richard Sefton looked away from both startled faces. His voice was calm as he spoke. "Don't you understand it yet? *It isn't the world that has died—it's we three.* You, Doctor, died in an explosion, in an accident in your laboratory. You, Marcia, died as you dove into the pool. And I died quietly this morning, in a hospital bed."

HE waited a moment, then said, "We must have died at the same instant. Somewhere in the laws that govern the lives and deaths of mortals, there is a link to understand this. We three are bound in death. We are wandering in the miasmic unreality of a world that is not a world, halfway between life and afterlife. The world has died for us because we are dead."

DeValgre looked at Sefton steadily. Then, as if Sefton had not spoken at all, the Doctor said, "There is work to be done. We must go where the breath of disease and decay cannot find us. Perhaps an island in the South Seas. There is a task ahead of us: the knowledge of the Earth must be retained, the storehouses of civilization must be preserved for future generations."

Sefton rose to his feet and looked at the girl, at her expressionless face. He had said it, then, and there was nothing more. She raised her hands slowly and he took them in his own. What did the

dead do? he wondered.

He heard himself speaking. "There is a seaplane base on the river. We can load supplies there." So the force of the habits of life persisted. Man worked all his life; he had to do something, and even in the death before complete death, man kept working. Where did death begin?

This is the Great Adventure, he thought suddenly—this is it!

"Ready?" DeValgre called. They went to an automobile and climbed in.

It started immediately, the doctor driving, and the sound of the motor in the oppressive silence was loud.

Veering around heaps of wreckage, avoiding as best he could the scattered bodies in his path, he drove with the skill of a man in a dream. The fire was higher in the city and the street across town was unscathed as yet. A street car had run riot at one point, careening off its track at a curve. An armored truck was overturned on the corner, and dead men in uniforms were inside the twisted cab. The rear door had been thrown open by the crash. The pavement around it gleamed with discs of silver—coins.

The headlights of the car cut through the streets into a comparatively clear section and they were at the river. There were traces of fire here, wisps of smoke rising slowly.

They left the car, walked down the odorous avenue to a tug landing. Sefton pointed out the lights of the airport across the wide stretch of water. The huge round structures of gas tanks loomed over them as they moved to the dock.

The river, dark and ugly, followed them as they moved along its edge. But farther up it was gray with new light.

Suddenly DeValgre paused. He motioned for them to halt and walked ahead alone. He went but a short ways, returned with a frown on his face.

"Gas," he said. "The tanks must be leaking. Smell it?"

Sefton looked back to the giant containers over the dock. They were high, massive. He did not remember their being so tall before. Suddenly he knew why.

"Let's get away from here," he said. "The production is still going on and they are overflowing. With no wind, this section will be deadly before long. Asphyxiation." Even as he spoke, wondering why he bothered, because there was no fear now, the wind arose, and he thought he felt a breeze cool against his face.

"Look!" cried DeValgre pointing. A nearby building was wreathed in billowing smoke, flames curled out of the upper windows. "The wind's starting fires again! And the gas! Run!"

The world had become an unstable mass, a whirlpool filled with sound. The ground opened and disappeared and all sight vanished in red and black clouds. . . .

TIME had passed, and Richard Sefton opened his eyes. The heat beat him as if with blows as he struggled erect. Marcia was lying at the edge of the dock. There was a trickle of blood upon her forehead.

"Are you all right?" he said quietly, feeling alarm and confusion. It was meaningless, all of it.

She was looking up at him now, drinking in the sight of him. "Where is DeValgre?" she said at length. Sefton looked along the shore. It was littered with broken timber and scraps of metal from the explosion. Through the wall of billowing red, Sefton saw the rearing forms of the other gas tanks, and still he did nothing.

He saw him! Struggling to stand erect, moving painfully from out of the

great grey-brown clouds, Sefton saw DeValgre. He was charging down the street toward DeValgre at the same instant. *What does this mean?* Sefton was asking himself. *Why should I feel concern?* His legs were carrying him swiftly through the scattered debris, and with each leap he felt life pulsing in him—life or its illusion—*and still he did not know!*

"DeValgre!" The old man was gasping. His face was a smear of blood that would not clot. Sefton stood over him like a man in a dream, watching the frail chest of the little man heaving spasmodically, struggling for breath. Was this—

He looked up. The flames farther ahead had reached closer to the second line of tanks. It was a moment before they would go up. Sefton looked back to the old man at his feet with a mixture of terror and wonder, and a flicker of doubt born of some new understanding sprang up within him.

He was watching a dead man die!

HE lifted DeValgre to his shoulders, moving him up as he would a sack, and he retraced his steps, but he hardly knew what he was doing. The old man was coughing, and blood from his multiple wounds was coursing down over Sefton, soaking them both. Through it all, Sefton did only one thing. He half-listened, half-felt the weakening breathing of the man on his shoulders. He had realized that his life and the life of the girl was bound up with DeValgre. If DeValgre died—

The shore was a line of scarlet. Sefton reached the girl, shouted to her and dragged her to the edge of the dock. He pushed her in and dove after her, still carrying the inert form with him. The night was shattered by another explosion, and for more than a minute there was nothing but a vast pale sheet of luminescent red in all the world.

The heat came down in one solid blistering mass, and the planking under the wharf to which Sefton and the girl clung became too hot to hold. The edges of the wood began to turn black and smoke poured from within its depths. Fighting to keep afloat, Sefton held to the old man. Marcia Durette was swimming nearby, trying to help. "Get under the dock!" Sefton shouted to her. The sky was raining hundreds of fragments from the broken city.

One of the piles that held the wharf suddenly cracked, and a huge section of dock slid into the water with a hiss that raised a cloud of scalding steam over the water. But the girl had come out and was swimming easily toward the middle of the river. Sefton slowly followed.

The current in the center was strong and the three were swept along downstream. Inches away a drifting tug swung by aimlessly, a dark, sinister hulk. A plank hit Sefton in the side, and writhing with pain, he swung about and grasped it. He called to the girl to take an end. . . .

So they drifted down the river, while on both banks the city of ghosts burned and let its heart shatter. And then, an immeasurable time later, far down beyond the curtains of flame, they made for shore and crawled wearily up the sandy bank.

And DeValgre had died!

Sefton sat beside the body, eyes unseeing. Marcia Durette was close to him, holding his hand. "Marcia," he said, after a time. "Marcia, he's . . . *dead.*"

There was incongruity and more in his feelings. Sefton looked at the withered little man, lying on the beach with his eyes and mouth open, his body still and the wet garments clinging to his thin frame—and somehow a

great burden was lifted. Somewhere, in the death of the third person who had *lived*—life came again to Richard Sefton.

"We are alive." Marcia Durette had spoken. In her eyes Sefton saw the fear that had been there, saw it leaving, and with it he saw the same things he felt.

"You are strong. The duty and joy of life rests on your shoulders."

No voice had spoken, but both had heard the words. Even as they looked, the clenched fist of the dead old man lying before them opened. The palm gently opened and came to rest. It was as if that little fist had held on to realization and understanding—alone of all who lived—and it held it until it knew it could be passed on.

"Do you understand, dear?"

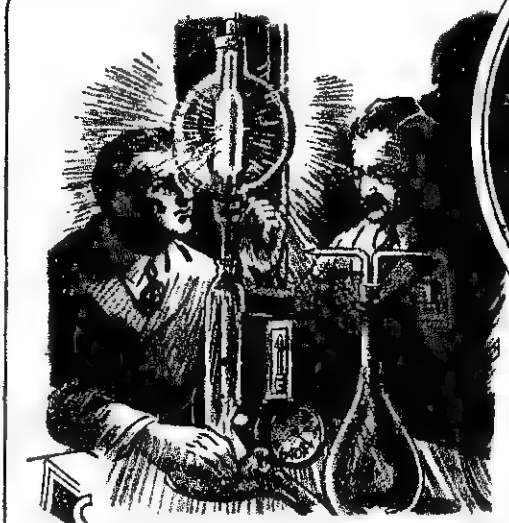
Sefton nodded slowly. "The hypertension that held my heart was released by the radiation's shock." For one horrible moment he laughed rawly, nakedly. "The blow that murdered a world saved me!" But then he heard again in his mind—"the duty and joy of life . . ." and the laugh died on his lips.

They both rose. Down the river lay many ships, untouched, filled with fuel and provisions. Ahead the river broadened and on the horizon it met the sea. Beyond the horizon lay the world, a world that would live again.

Sefton held the girl's hand tightly, and together they walked toward the ships.

RIDDLES OF SCIENCE

Light Without Heat



SCIENCE IS CONTINUALLY **SEARCHING** FOR THE ANSWER TO THE RIDDLE OF **COLD LIGHT**. THUS FAR, THEY HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO PRODUCE ANYTHING EFFECTIVE AND SATISFACTORY ALTHOUGH SOME PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE.

DOWN IN THE **OCEAN'S DEPTHS** STRANGE **FISHES** HAVE THE POWER OF PRODUCING **COLD LIGHT**

SOME **INSECTS** ARE CAPABLE OF PRODUCING **COLD LIGHT**, OF GREAT BRILLIANCE AND EFFICIENCY. IT IS THIS LIGHT THAT PUZZLES SCIENTISTS. EVEN THE LOWLY INSECT POSSESSES **POWERS** ALL SCIENCE HAS BEEN UNABLE TO EQUAL. JUST WHAT IS "**COLD LIGHT**"? THE ANSWER, WHEN IT IS FOUND, WILL BE OF GREAT **BENEFIT TO MAN**.

IF science knew the answer to the riddle of cold light, as created by the lightning bug and undersea fishes, man would have in his hands a very valuable secret. Today we have very efficient lights, but the vexing factor is the amount of heat that accompanies the radiation. For scientific, industrial, and experimental purposes, this heat is a problem that holds back many important advances. Also, of major concern, is the amount of power wasted by this production of heat. With cold light, this could be saved.

THE MAN WHO SAW

By THORNTON AYRE

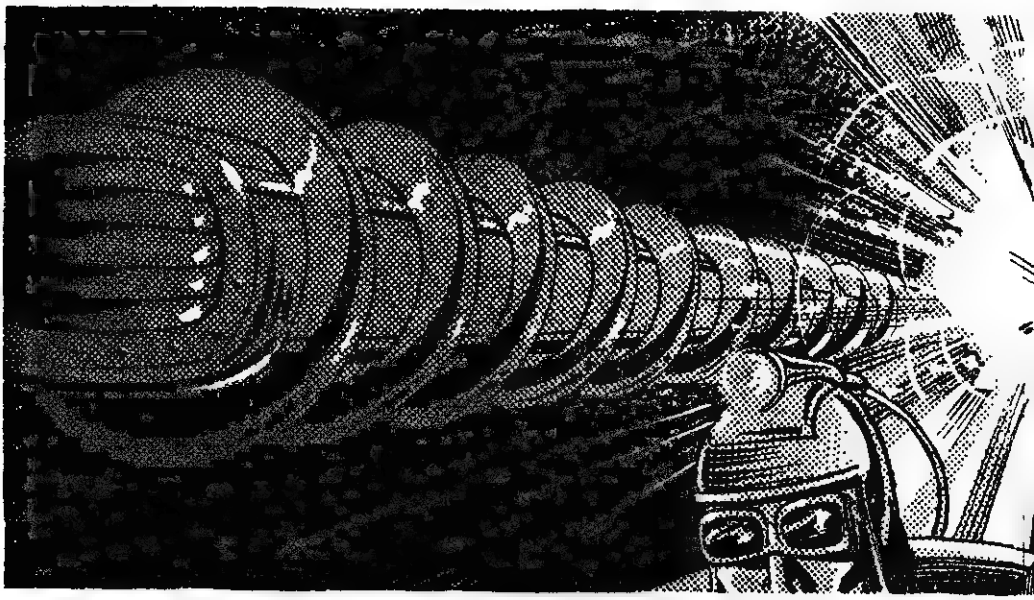
Blind Ralph Marshall's sight slowly returned, but it wasn't his own world he saw. It was another, where a scientist worked at an awful plot.

RALPH MARSHALL never knew what really happened. One minute he was carrying on his normal work as mining engineer, supervising the drilling of the giant shaft which it was hoped would one day pass under the Atlantic Ocean from the United States to Britain—and the next there was the sound of smashing concussion in his ears and blinding light before his eyes. He stumbled and fell amidst a rain of tumbling rocks, props, and underpinnings. . . .

Voices merged out of darkness. Sounds of instruments clinking and tinkling in glass vessels. Ralph Marshall felt throbbing pain throughout his body. He stirred and winced. A nurse's voice spoke to him gently.

"Just relax, Mr. Marshall. You'll be all right."

He obeyed perforce, piecing together the past events. There was a wadding of bandages across his eyes, tight binding round his arm. It felt as though his



TWO WORLDS

leg were in a plaster cast. But his biggest worry was the dark—total, pitchy. Had his sight gone? Had it been destroyed in the mine blow-out? That was something he did not dare to think about.

But as hours and days slid by, as days slipped into weeks, as the rest of his body healed and his eyes did not, he began to realize the truth. He realized it all the more clearly when the bandages were unwound from his face and he raised his eyelids. The darkness remained unchanged.

"Doc!" he shouted hoarsely, gripping the hand that held him. "Doc, what's wrong with me? I can't see! Everything's . . . black!"

The voice of Dr. Talford Flint, chief doctor of the hospital, sounded as impartial as ever.

"Just sit here, Mr. Marshall, while we take a look at you."

Ralph fumbled for the high backed chair and fell into it, sat motionless, breathing hard, staring into the abyss. He heard the whirr and buzz of electrical machinery, the mutter of voices in consultation.

Suddenly, sharp questions stabbed from the dark.

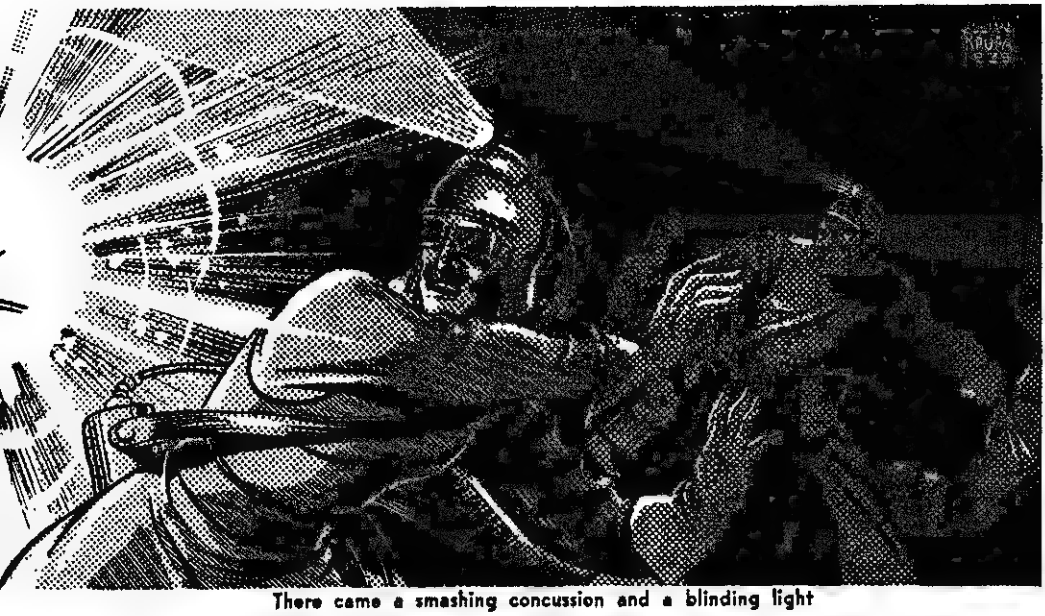
"Can you see this? No? Well – *this!* No reaction? Hm . . ."

More muttering. Dr. Flint's voice rose higher than the others with its sharp, acid sting.

"The eyes react normally, I tell you! Optic nerves are quite in order. Maybe a case of temporary shock. Nonsense, man!" he scoffed at somebody. "Nonsense! Cannot be the brain-centers . . ."

Ralph sprang up suddenly. "Would somebody mind telling me what the devil's going on in here?" he demanded, almost with a touch of hysteria. "Stop cackling, can't you, and let me have the truth!"

Flint's voice replied, monotonously calm. "If we could tell you what *is*



There came a smashing concussion and a blinding light

wrong with your eyes, Mr. Marshall, we would do so—but we cannot! They answer to every one of our tests, and for that reason you should be able to see. That you cannot see is something we are unable to explain. It's—it's temporary blindness and will pass off eventually, just as snow-blindness does."

"And supposing it doesn't?" Ralph stood mastering himself. He went on desperately, "There must be *somebody* who can diagnose, surely?"

"In this room are the best experts in optics, Mr. Marshall," Flint retorted. "Your firm insisted on the best possible specialists to examine you. That has been done. It is simply a case of your eyes not answering to normal optical laws, that's all. We can do nothing more to help you—but keep on calling nonetheless so we can note an improvement the moment it appears. We'll keep thorough track of your case, of course."

Ralph smiled bitterly. Thorough track! That was the last thing he could imagine this cold-blooded fish, Talford Flint, ever doing. Though he had never yet seen him he had long since summed up the man's nature from his ruthless voice.

RALPH said quietly, "Well, thanks . . ." A hand caught his arm. He could tell by the cool draft when he was in the main passage. Then another hand caught him—a strong hand he immediately recognized, that of Ed Rutter, his assistant engineer on the Shaft.

"Good to see you around on your pins again, Ralph." Ed's voice was genuinely pleased. "How's tricks?"

"Not so hot, I guess." Ralph fingered his dark glasses and gave a brief account of the medico's edict as they passed down the steps together.

"They're crazy!" was Ed's summing up. "I dragged you out of that blowout myself. You got a smack on the head, a cracked leg, and a burned arm —nothing more. You'll be O.K., don't worry. In the meantime you can hitch to me. I'll keep the flies off you."

"That," Ralph said quietly, "is the part I don't like. You know I'm not built to rely on other people. I've got to do things myself, with my own two hands— Oh, hell, why did this have to happen to *me?*"

Ed said philosophically, "I suppose things can happen to the best of us. Stop worrying, man. Just keep on digging in with me at the apartment until you get right again."

Ralph gripped the strong hand gratefully. He needed no words to convince him of the tough, red-haired engineer's loyalty. Ed Rutter was the sort of man who'd give his right arm in defense of somebody he really liked.

There was a long silence between them after that. Then after a while Ralph noted from the increasing roar of traffic that they had come into the heart of New York. In his mind's eye he could see the way to their apartment, could also see the three-mile distance of criss-crossing streets which led to the vast excavations at the Shaft entrance. Three times a shaft had been attempted, and still it was incomplete.

For Ralph all that was over now, he felt. He had to pattern a new sort of life. He had money saved, plenty of it. The firm had intimated they would grant him a life pension. Did that imply that they thought he would never . . . ? He crushed the thought from his mind.

Over the meal in the apartment Ed's voice went on in forced cheeriness. Ralph did not listen to all the things he said. His thoughts were on his immediate predicament. Then he started violently as the alarm clock went off—

that infernal clock, always going off at the wrong time, moving itself along the mantelshelf by the very vibration of its ringing.

Ed leapt for it, jammed on the silencer.

"Tell you what," he said, turning again. "Why not let me go and get you one of those dogs? You know—eyes of the blind, and all that. I don't want to rub it in, but you *could* get about."

"Thanks—no," Ralph answered curtly. "I haven't given up hope yet, Ed. A dog to run around with me would sort of make me feel tied down. I'll get better—somehow."

"But until you do—"

"Oh, quit worrying me, can't you?" Ralph blazed.

Ed relaxed and lighted a cigarette. Ralph crushed out his own cigarette with strong, knotty fingers. Thereafter he drummed on the table with a definite desperation of spirit.

IN the ensuing days Ralph Marshall debated many courses of action. Should he just vanish from sight? Should he put an end to himself? He did not consider it would be cowardice: he was a firm believer in ridding the world of useless material, organic or inorganic. He might . . . No: there was always the thought he might recover.

A week passed. In that week his moods were those of a man driven to distraction. He had periods of smouldering calm; then he flew into berserk rages, ranted, finally apologized—and Ed Rutter came from and went to work on the Shaft with calm, cheerful understanding. He knew only too well the ordeal his dynamic, energetic friend was undergoing.

Then something happened! One of the mornings when he was left alone as usual Ralph noticed something queer. There was a puncture in the abyss of darkness—a tiny hole of light!

Ralph's whole being suddenly exploded with hysterical delight. He sat staring at that hole, rolling his eyes to make sure, but whichever way he turned his eyes the hole remained. It was perhaps as large as a pea. Straining to the utmost, he tried to analyze what he saw. He held his hand before his face, but for some reason could not see any trace of his hand at all in the hole. Not that that discouraged him: he remained confident that he would do so before long.

He phoned the news to Ed down in the Shaft. That evening they had a celebration supper on the strength of it. From then on Ed was as keenly interested as Ralph himself in the gradual expansion of that hole day by day. Once or twice Ralph toyed with the idea of going back to the hospital for an examination, then decided against it. Better to get himself wholly well before being tested and proven all right for work again.

The hole grew. With the growth came a sense of dawning wonder to Ralph. Four days later it was large enough to encompass a quarter of his vision, but he was not looking at anything in the apartment! He walked in bewilderment from room to room, but he never saw a familiar thing, and certainly failed to observe the furniture with which he collided. And yet the scene changed as he moved about. He saw things which, in their partial state, he could not understand or reconcile. Otherwise it seemed he was as blind as ever. He still could not see his waving hands in front of his face, could not see a sign of anything immediately around him.

His first hopes began to diminish, but not entirely. There was definite interest in watching the development of re-

turning sight—though what sort of a world he was going to look into he dared not imagine.

He purposely kept most of the truth from Ed, only told him enough to let him believe he was recovering very gradually. In another week the vision was completely clear to Ralph, and sitting on the divan in the living room one morning with his dark glasses off, he gazed—and gazed.

HE was alone in the apartment; he knew that—but instead of being in the apartment he was apparently sitting on the sidewalk of a tremendously long main street. He gazed down it steadily, remarking the absolute clarity of detail. People passed him constantly but never glanced at him—busy people, men and women, just as he had always known them, except that their attire was rather different to prevailing fashion. It struck him as curious, but here and there people came straight toward him and passed on—*through* him! He was convinced of it after a while, and the sensation was startling.

He studied this particular section of city carefully. It was not familiar in the least, was apparently a mass of rearing towers. Here and there were bullet-nosed rocket airplanes, far in advance of any known to 20th Century civilization.

The buildings seemed to have millions of windows. Directional towers for aircraft were atop every edifice. There were car parks high in the air, floor upon floor, driven by endless belt systems. All ground space was devoted to traffic ways and open parks, with special sidewalks for pedestrians.

Even the traffic was peculiar. There was not a single recognizable make of automobile in sight, and what there were moved silently and swiftly. It was odd, Ralph reflected—in fact fantastic. He could see all this activity, which should have made the din of a supermodern city, yet all he could hear was the pounding tick of that old fashioned alarm clock on the mantel. He closed his eyes momentarily and the vision was shut out; but it was there again when he opened them once more.

His exact emotions were unfathomable. In one sense he was profoundly disappointed because he was obviously as blind as ever; yet in another he was aware of a feeling of triumph at being the dissociated observer of something bafflingly complex. This required study.

So to Ed Rutter he only gave brief reports and wore dark glasses whenever Ed was about. But week after week thereafter he studied the city by day and night, the periods of daylight and darkness corresponding exactly with those of the normal world.

Among other things Ralph took advantage of Ed's suggestion. He got a dog. Thereby he was enabled to extend the scope of his activity. At first he was faced with considerable confusion. Walking down the main street in the other city, for instance, demanded walking through a New York emporium and leaving by the back entrance! To gain elevation and study the city properly he had to go to the top of New York's highest buildings.

E v e r y w h e r e his dog unfailingly guided him. Everywhere the faces of the Others looked unseeingly at him. He was the invisible observer of a great, mysterious, busy world.

It was perhaps inevitable that the vision of this new world should affect Ralph with increasing force. His body was in the normal world, but sight was elsewhere! He got into the habit of calling to the people passing by him—and getting no answer of course—of repeating the various proclamations on the signs and posters he saw, all of them

in an unknown language. He began to build up a small vocabulary, both from looking at newspapers over people's shoulders and watching the things they did, or the things they indicated, when they spoke. He became gradually adept in lip reading.

There was something else too. In this other plane matter was no barrier to him. He passed through walls and people as easily as people passed through him. Yet of course it was impossible for him to touch anything.

Ralph forgot his caution as time went on. His interest was utterly absorbed. On more than one occasion Ed was surprised to find him in the act of apparently talking to himself in unknown jargon, staring straight before him while he did it. It worried Ed not a little. He thought he took the right course when he reported the matter back to the hospital.

ACCORDINGLY the hospital contacted Ralph's firm. They in turn made arrangements, and one morning Dr. Flint himself and two other experts turned up at the apartment.

Once the brief examination was over Ralph sat in his bedroom, waiting, listening to the voices floating through the fanlight over the door.

"I cannot help but think he needs attention, gentlemen," Ed was saying earnestly. "Being left alone too much maybe. Probably affecting his mind. He talks to himself, does queer things. He even thinks at times that he is in a street when standing in this room!"

Ralph did not catch the answer, but he got to his feet and entered the living room suddenly. He sensed the sudden expectancy his arrival created.

"Gentlemen," he said quietly, "I think there is something you should know. I can see." He took off his dark glasses. "I see, but I do not see you! I do not even see New York. No; I see another world, another city, another race of people. At this very moment I am looking down the main street."

Still there was silence.

"Well, have you nothing to say?" Ralph demanded. "Aren't you even going to try and find out what is wrong? I suppose I should have told you this sooner, but I was waiting for you to tell *me*. Only you didn't! If you can't find out the truth then let me get a man who will. There's Dr. Brutus Lloyd, for instance. He was with me at college once—"

"I hardly think we need to consider the so called merits of Dr. Lloyd at this moment," broke in Flint's curt voice. Then in a more conciliatory tone he went on, "We are well able to take care of you, Mr. Marshall. If you will accompany us back to the hospital where we have all the instruments we will see what we can do."

"It's obviously an optical defect," Ralph said, as he put back his glasses and was helped into his coat. "You know—embracing an angle in space which we cannot see under normal conditions. These other people *do* exist, and their city is much improved on ours."

"Of course—of course." Dr. Flint sounded as though he was humoring a lunatic.

Ralph was full of inner doubts as he was driven through the streets. Dimly through his dark glasses he could see apparent buildings whirling towards him, through which the car passed like vapor. The whole mad other-plane was careening round in dizzying circles. He felt himself sway a little when he finally alighted from the car. He was taken up in an elevator and seemed to rise up the face of a building. He became stationary half way up and fell into a chair. Once his glasses were removed he found

himself gazing over a futuristic square with waving trees lining either side of it. Silent, as ever.

Then Dr. Flint said, "Now for a few tests, Mr. Marshall."

This time the tests were not entirely confined to the eyes. For an hour or more Ralph found himself taken from chair to chair, felt unseen instruments at work upon him, heard muttered consultations. Then at last Flint spoke out clearly.

"Mr. Marshall, our tests reveal no change whatever in your eyes since the previous examination. Whatever you believe you see cannot be at all connected with your eyes. It is, to be perfectly frank, the outcome of brain pressure from your accident. Delusions, if you will. Once you asked for the truth —now you shall have it. So far as we can tell there is no chance of your eyes ever recovering sight. Further, the strange visions you speak of, together with the queer behavior noted by your friend Mr. Rutter lead us to one definite conclusion . . ."

"You mean you think I'm crazy?" Ralph snapped.

"We believe," Flint said, "that you would certainly be better under observation here until you lose your delusions. We can no doubt soon cure you. It is what your firm would wish."

"Now listen!" Ralph exclaimed earnestly. "You think I'm going insane. I tell you I'm as sane as you are, only my vision's gone haywire. Didn't it ever occur to any of you that a shock might cause the optic nerves to become hypersensitive or something?"

"Are you an optician, Mr. Marshall?" Flint inquired coldly.

"You know I'm not; but I have some scientific knowledge and I know plenty of things can happen to a person after a shock. Take—take lightning, for instance. Haven't you ever heard of people being able to see through solids after being struck by lightning? Is it not possible, then, that I—"

"We don't think so!" Flint broke in curtly. "We are dealing with facts, not fantasies. You require treatment and close supervision, examination by other specialists, in our psychopathic department."

"But look here—"

"You may rest assured we are acting from the best interests," Flint concluded implacably. Then aside, "Attend to it!"

A door slammed.

Ralph swore openly, started to struggle as strong hands took hold of him, obviously those of male nurses. Finally he gave up the battle as useless. His dark glasses were replaced on his nose and he was led out into the corridor. The next thing he knew he was in a room, alone.

He knew after a while that it was well furnished, comfortable enough—but his hands found bars on the windows and the door was securely locked. From rage his emotions changed to deep wonder. Flint must surely know he was *not* insane. Why, then, the captivity?

CHAPTER II

Dr. Brutus Lloyd

ONCE he realized how ruthlessly the medicos had put Ralph Marshall into virtual imprisonment, Ed Rutter's fury knew no bounds. He bitterly regretted ever having mentioned the matter.

He ranted and raved at the callous Dr. Flint, and got nowhere. He tried to make the newspapers take it up, but editors were chary of it. As a last hope Ed recalled the name of Dr. Brutus Lloyd, looked up his address and occupation from the directory. He was

listed as a research chemist, but his degrees filled two small columns and other remarks spoke of proficiency in the fields of optics, physics, medicine, and criminology.

"In plain words, a dabbler," Ed mused. "Might do worse, though."

So he tracked Dr. Lloyd down to his out-town house—a rather old fashioned place in its own grounds, well free of the city bustle yet connected with the metropolis by a wide main road.

Inside, as a manservant took his card, Ed found evidences of unexpected opulence about the residence. His feet sank into rich carpet; the walls were lined with armory, costly brasses, rare antiques. Clearly Brutus Lloyd was not short of cash by any means.

The manservant came back noiselessly. "If you will step into the laboratory, Mr. Rutter?"

Ed found himself conducted through a door at the end of the hall. He passed into one of the most completely equipped laboratories he had ever seen. The glass roof was fitted with slanted mirrors so that shadowless daylight was cast in every direction. For a while he stood looking round on beakers, retorts, electric engines, switchboards. Of Dr. Lloyd himself there seemed to be no sign—until suddenly a tiny figure came from behind a bench, wiping his hands down his smock.

For a moment Ed stared in surprise. Lloyd was no more than four feet ten inches tall, an amazingly gnomelike man. He was not a dwarf or a freak, simply vest-pocket size. The most surprising thing about him was his head. It was squarish with a brow like a baby cliff, capped on top by a tuft of jet black hair which permitted one lock to curl in a J down the immense forehead. The eyes were small and piercing gray, almost masked by black eyebrows and lashes. The face, though overbalanced by the brow, was powerful for all its smallness. Possibly Lloyd was forty; certainly no less.

"I presume you came for a reason other than to gape, Mr. Rutter?"

Brutus Lloyd's voice was the biggest shock of all. It was deep bass. "I'm —I'm sorry, doctor," Ed hastened to apologize. "I sort of expected to—"

"To find a big man with a white beard dabbling in hellish alchemy?" Lloyd asked, with a babyish smile. "Well you didn't, and I'm not. . . . What's your trouble?"

"I believe you're a criminologist and scientist? Also connected with optics, physics, and medicine?"

"*Dolus versatur in generalibus,*" Lloyd rumbled. "A snare lurks in generalities. . . . Just what concern is it of yours what I do? What are you?—a reporter? If so—out!"

"No—no, wait a minute. I want your help—from the criminal and optical side."

"Really?" Lloyd stroked his forelock for a moment. Then with his sharp little eyes narrowed a little he said slowly, "It will have to be something of surpassing interest to drag me from my research into subatomic cultures. What have you done, my friend? Robbed a bank?"

RATHER uncertain how to take the man Ed said quietly. "It's not me at all. I'm worrying over one Ralph Marshall, a friend of mine. He's in a hospital for supposed lunacy. He mentioned you just before they took him away. But actually he's no more insane than you are."

"I am indebted for the compliment. Ralph Marshall, you say? Not 'Stinker' Marshall who nearly blew me up in the college lab, and who's now working on the Atlantic Shaft?"

"The same—only he isn't working

any more. This is serious, Dr. Lloyd, really it is . . ." Ed went on to relate the full details. Then he finished earnestly, "You've got influence. You're an expert in optics, medicine, and all the rest. You know more than all those darned sawbones put together. And since you know a thing or two about crime too you might be able to discover if there is a special reason, other than a medical one, for detaining Ralph."

"Frankly, Mr. Rutter, I am not a police officer. My stature is against it. As to Ralph, the situation is little short of preposterous!"

"I thought a true scientist never called anything preposterous! I really believe Ralph *can* see a city or something which we can't. I thought he had a neurosis at first. Now I know differently . . ."

"Hm!" Lloyd flattened his J on his brow again. He stood thinking.

"The firm will back up whatever measures you see fit to take," Ed went on earnestly. "If you can prove to medical satisfaction that Ralph is perfectly sane you will at least get him out of imprisonment. At least you should do so. If you can't, then maybe you can find the right legal means. Ralph has *got* to be released. He's a master engineer, and valuable."

"I suppose you are aware that despite my brilliant reputation I am not at all in favor with the regular doctors, specialists, and patchers of human framework generally?" Lloyd asked calmly. "My methods are unorthodox. At times, surprisingly enough, I have been called mad. My chemical work, leading me to deal in Latin so much, has led me to call many a man worse than a fool in a language he does not understand.

"I may, for instance, know optics inside out, but I am not a registered optician. However, the law entitles you to call in a specialist if you wish—and though not registered I am certainly a specialist. For two reasons—A, my regard for old 'Stinker' Marshall, and—B, my desire to see a proper engineer finish the Atlantic Shaft, I will look into the business. *Experto crede,* my friend—trust one who has had experience."

"Quite." Ed nodded, uncertainly.

"I have another reason—C," Lloyd went on in his rumbling voice. "If Ralph *has* somehow gotten his vision bent into another line of light waves he can be of invaluable assistance to science generally through his revelations. I'll see him.

"First, however, I shall have to prepare. Instruments are needed to try a case like this, and I shall have to bring influence to bear to get permission to make the examination. I'll advise you when I'm ready."

Ed caught the small hand and shook it warmly. "I can't begin to thank you enough for—"

"Then don't waste my time and your own," the little scientist replied briefly. "Good morning!"

IT took a week, overcoming professional prejudice, for Brutus Lloyd to secure permission to examine. It was Ralph Marshall's firm, urged by Ed, who finally ordered it, and against that Flint could do nothing. Ed accompanied the diminutive, Latin-spouting scientist to the hospital in his small but powerful car and helped him to carry in a variety of instruments. There were moments when he felt inclined to smile at Lloyd's Derby hat, long overcoat, and neatly rolled umbrella. He had a remarkable gift for carrying that umbrella on his arm and thereafter apparently forgetting its presence.

Ralph Marshall was finally brought into the wide, light room singled out

for the examination, and after a few words sat in the high backed chair. Dr. Flint and the summoned specialists, some of them smiling tolerantly, sat in a half circle round the instruments. Only Flint looked impatient, his fingers drumming on his bony knees.

Skipping round like a goblin in his overcoat, hat carefully laid on the surgical table, Lloyd first set up a curious object like a shimmering ball, connected to electrical devices on the tripodical stand beneath it. It started to coruscate with startling radiance when the current was turned on. At times it filled the room with bewildering incandescence, then at others faded rapidly through the spectrum colors into invisibility. The spectators blinked. Flint stared hard.

Lloyd said in his rumbling voice, "Did you see anything then, Ralph?"

"At the moment, sir, I'm looking at some—some sort of ball," Ralph answered slowly. "Solid looking piece of work. It comes and goes."

"Hah!" Lloyd pressed a button with the ferrule of his umbrella. The ball seemed to vanish entirely, but Ralph became excited.

"Now it's quite distinct! It's hovering over the city streets!"

"Such rubbish!" Flint cried, leaping up. "Dr. Lloyd, this is sheer absurdity!"

Lloyd surveyed him, eyelids drooping. *"Ex nihilo nihil fit*—from nothing nothing comes," he observed. "And I haven't finished yet, Flint. Sit down!"

Flint slowly obeyed, his lips a tight line.

"You and your tests!" the little scientist went on sourly; then he pushed his ball instrument to one side and proceeded to get to work with a needle-recording apparatus, shafts of criss-crossing light, and finally a prism device radiating all the colors of the rainbow.

"What did you see, Ralph?" he asked finally, stroking his J.

"I saw a ball, a prism, and something like a torch beam."

"That," Lloyd said, "is exactly what I thought you'd see. You can relax for a moment. Now, gentlemen!" He spun round like a top and pointed his umbrella at the group in sudden accusation. "Gentlemen," he rumbled, "I have pleasure in telling you that Ralph Marshall is *not* mad! On the contrary he is as sane as you are—saner probably. He is also one of the most useful acquisitions to science yet known.'

"Proven, of course, by this — this hardware of yours?" Flint asked sarcastically.

Lloyd was unabashed. His frosty gray eyes were bright with triumph.

"We all know—at least *I* know because I am a scientist of the first order —that the human eye is only capable of seeing within the ranges encompassed between ultra violet and infra red at opposite ends of the spectrum scale. Also there are sixty octaves of light, of which we see only one! Only *one*, gentlemen!" Lloyd raised his umbrella aloft dramatically. "This ball instrument of mine is designed to cover the whole range of invisible light fields. By altering its light-reflecting capacity it gives off either the light waves *we* see, or the light waves beyond our range. In the latter instance it becomes invisible to us—but it becomes visible to Mr. Marshall! In other words, his vision has slipped into an octave higher than our own. So slender a margin, gentlemen—so unusual for it to happen. This is the first real case I have encountered. The other three instruments verified, prismatically, that he is indeed looking into a plane an octave above normal visual range."

"From which," Flint asked with deadly calm, "you deduce what?"

"I deduce—A, that people move and have their being in this other plane; and that—B, an accident caused Mr. Marshall's vision to be warped into that plane."

Flint snapped, "Then these people are all around us? These—others?"

"Naturally!" Lloyd stood challengingly erect.

"Then in that case," Flint said, smiling maliciously, "you infer that these people occupy the same space as we do? That their city is superimposed over New York? Even you should know that no two bodies can occupy the same space at the same time."

LLOYD'S fingers quivered down his J of hair. Only the slightly higher pitch of his voice revealed his exasperation.

"*Nemo me impune lacessit* — no one affronts me with impunity," he breathed. "Your ignorance surpasses my highest expectations! Any expert physicist will confirm the fact that *our* space is only one of *thousands* of spaces!"*

"Fictional nonsense, Dr. Lloyd." Flint commented sourly. "We are only concerned with facts. In my opinion Mr. Marshall is still completely blind and a victim of mental perturbations. I think I speak for my colleagues, too . . .?" He glanced round sharply and there was a solemn nodding of heads.

"In other words," Lloyd said slowly, "you do not *want* to believe?"

"I didn't say that—"

"But *I do!*" Lloyd bellowed, thumping his umbrella on the floor. "The whole lot of you—you in particular, Flint—are either a collection of conservative, unimaginative boneheads, or else you prefer to believe the dementia theory for your own purposes. Don't interrupt me, Flint! You have the authority here, certainly. What you say goes in this hospital, and you might possibly scare other men into obeying you. But you don't scare me. I am Brutus Lloyd! I cannot legally force you into releasing Marshall—but I can, and will, do other things."

"Such as?" Flint inquired calmly.

Lloyd put his Derby back on his head. "*Cadit quaestio*—discussion is at an end. Let's go, Mr. Rutter. . . . I'll be seeing you again, Ralph."

Lloyd gathered up some of his instruments and departed. Ed looked after him, then back at Flint.

"Listen, doctor, you're not taking Ralph back into imprisonment without plenty of opposition!" he snapped. "I'm warning you—"

"Take it easy, Ed," Ralph himself broke in quietly, rising from the chair. "Causing a scene won't do any good."

"Evidently the patient has more sense than anybody," Flint observed dryly. He stood watching, lips compressed, as the male nurses came forward.

"I'll wait and see what happens," Ralph went on. He shook Ed's hand firmly and Ed concealed the surprise he felt as a hard lump of paper was pressed

* A molecule is made up of empty space in much the same fashion as the universe is mainly empty space. It is not only possible, but probable, that the apparently empty spaces are filled with other matter working at a different pitch of vibration, and therefore completely invisible to us. Matter dovetails and interlocks and each section is at a pitch of vibration which makes it invisible to its immediate neighbor.

Imagine a wire netting for a moment. You would say it is full of holes—but the holes are filled with matter at a different vibration invisible to us, and *because* of such vibration each section believes itself to be alone and isolated. Nature has so designed her so-called empty space that other molecules move about it in the apparent emptiness—hence the belief of Mr. Marshall that he walks through buildings and that people walk through him. What actually happens is that his molecules never touch the other molecules but pass by them, like—like pouring water through the nose of a watering can.—Author.

in his palm. What could Ralph be up to?

When he left the hospital a few moments later with the rest of the instruments he found Lloyd waiting for him in the car. Slipping in beside him he unfolded the crumpled note and the pair of them read in mounting surprise. It was badly written, since Marshall had been unable to see the writing, but it was decipherable nonetheless:

"Don't endanger anything, Eddy. I've been waiting for a chance to give you this note. I have discovered something almost incredible since this side-slipped vision came upon me. It is to my advantage that you let me stay in my cell for the time being. I have one or two things to look into. I think, but cannot yet be sure, that I have happened on a particularly amazing plot in this 'other world' which affects ours! And unless I am entirely mistaken Dr. Talford Flint is mixed up in it somewhere.

"This possibly accounts for his fanatical desire to keep me under lock and key. Once I'm sure of my ground I'll pass on the news to you. See me visitors' day. If you can find out anything about Flint in the meantime all the better. . . ."

Ed glanced up at Lloyd's thoughtful face.

"Well?" Ed asked briefly.

Lloyd did not reply; he only smiled as he started up the car's engine. But his face was preoccupied as he drove through the busy streets.

RALPH MARSHALL had made no idle observation in his note. His cell—for it was little better than that despite its furnishings—unknown to anybody else, was so placed that in the "other plane" it overlaid a small, compact laboratory, in which a solitary, white-garbed scientist seemed to spend nearly fifteen hours of every day.

Invariably, Marshall saw him arrive as soon as it was light; and he remained until about midnight. In the daytime he seemed to spend his time testing medical apparatus, peering into highly efficient microscopes, making notes, watching queer animalcules slithering and twisting nauseatingly in glass test-tubes.

Certainly Ralph did not like the man's face. It was cast in a ruthless mould. The lips were thin and tight, the jaw hard and cruel. The eyes, too, had the brittle brightness of a man driven by ambition to the exclusion of all finer sentiments. There were times when he seemed pleased to watch a queer, unknown animal—probably the equivalent of our guinea pig—twisting in near-death under the influence of some mystic fluid he had injected into it. Apparently he was working in secret for nobody ever came to see him and he prepared all his own meals.

But above all things it was the notes he made so assiduously that interested Ralph. By walking the length of his cell he was able to look over the scientist's shoulder and read what was being put down. So far, his knowledge of the language was limited, but there were parts of it he understood, and in particular one name which was bound to be the same in any language—Flint.

Was it referring to the chief of this very hospital? That was what Ralph wanted to find out: it was his one reason for submitting so tamely to captivity. What connection had Flint—if it was the same man—with this trap-jawed scientist of another plane of existence, so close, and yet so infinitely far away?

Most puzzling of all to Ralph were the evenings. He would watch the Unknown sit for nearly two hours in a chair, motionless, his head tilted back on two leather pads like those adorning

a dentist's chair. As he sat, his hand was at work on a neighboring scratch-pad, making all manner of notes, mainly chemical symbols in which Ralph was not in the least versed.

It did not, however, take much deduction to discover that the daytime laboratory work was based on the evening time notes—but why did the Unknown have to sit like that? Ralph cudgeled his brains over it for many days but he got no solution. As a matter of fact, it was Ed Rutter who worked on that particular mystery.

DETERMINED on his own account to more fully confirm Ralph's vague suspicions of Flint, he entered the hospital grounds by night—once Lloyd had discovered by various surreptitious methods exactly what part of the hospital the doctor occupied in his private moments—climbed the railings, and slid softly past the great isolation wards to the doctors' chambers' wing to the east of the hospital. To him it was not a difficult feat to climb to the balcony: his work in the Shaft had made him an adept climber.

He spent some little time discovering which window belonged to Dr. Flint's room, traced it finally from the rough sketch Lloyd had drawn. His hopes were verified when Flint came into the room, switched on the light, and without drawing the shades sat down at his desk to write.

Ed smiled grimly, withdrew from his pocket a tiny, flat microphone which Lloyd had given him. It went easily under the door-size window leading out onto the balcony. The rest of the instrument, perhaps as large as a portable typewriter and strapped to Ed's back, began to record whatever the microphone picked up on wax drums.

Ed switched the button and waited, listening to the small-size earphone. He heard nothing beyond the scratching of a pen so he switched off to conserve the battery power, went into action again when a man came into the room beyond.

He recognized him as one of the doctors who seemed to be Flint's right-hand man. After closing the door and locking it he came over to the desk.

"Not too late, am I?" he asked briefly. "I had that operation to finish on old Saunders."

"No, Dutton." Flint tossed aside his pen. "I haven't started yet . . ."

"How long do you think it will be before we're ready?"

"Depends. Perhaps a week. There's little time to lose now. And besides I want to get everything perfectly arranged before this guy Marshall happens to discover the truth. It's not likely that he will while locked in that cell—but if any fluke law can be brought along to release him he might discover plenty. Only by having freedom could he possibly come across Maravok's laboratory—and even at that only chance could lead him there. Just the same I've warned Maravok that we have a fellow with us whose eyes are geared to his particular space. He told me he was working on a visionary detector by which he'll be instantly warned if alien eyes discover him. Clever man, Maravok . . ." Flint's voice was full of grudging praise.

Outside, Ed stood listening tensely, frowning in wonderment. On his back the silently turning drums were recording every word.

"About this fellow Lloyd," Dutton mused. "He's damnably quiet, isn't he? In face of all he said he'd do? Think he's up to something?"

Flint laughed harshly. "Not him! The man's a clown—the biggest clown in New York City. He thinks he's a detective, a scientist, and God knows

what all rolled into one. Five feet of empty boasting, my friend, and a lot of phony instruments to back him up . . ."

"Phony enough to prove that Marshall *was* and *is* looking into the plane you contacted," Dutton pointed out uneasily.

"Well—yes," Flint admitted. "Rather a good thing he did find that out for it enabled us to know that Marshall's eyes *are* geared to the plane I've contacted. I suspected it might be so when Rutter called us to have a look at him in the first place. Most amazing case, Dutton. Yet, deeply though it stirs my professional curiosity, I cannot admit the truth of it with so much at stake. He must be kept out of the way, until we're ready anyway. Then it doesn't matter what he does!"

"Suppose Lloyd does manage to find a legal excuse for extracting Marshall. I don't think he's such a mug as he pretends to be."

"That," Flint said, "is a risk we have to take. We've got to stall for time until I have every detail. If the worst comes to the worst we can always arrange an—er—alteration of diet for Mr. Marshall which will make him too ill to be moved. We dare not kill him off: that would involve too searching an inquiry."

In the brief silence which followed Ed controlled a fierce impulse to kick the glass window through, open the door, and dash into the room. He wanted to beat the living daylights out of the callous hospital chief. Only the realization of the necessity for subtlety kept him in check.

Presently Flint spoke again. "Well, time's up!" There was the snap of a watch closing.

Ed peered cautiously through the window as silence dropped. Flint was seated in the armchair, head lying back on the cushion, hands resting lightly on the chair arms. He was gazing into space straight in front of him. Dutton was sitting opposite to him with a notebook and pencil, waiting.

"Now!" Flint exclaimed suddenly; then he started to talk in a quiet, monotonous voice. *"Having thoroughly impregnated the fluid, drop the cultures into it. There will be rapid metabolism. Then—"*

The monologue veered into profoundest technique possible and could only interest a medical expert. But the thought of cultures and fluids, that certain sinister suggestion of a deep medical experiment, remained uncomfortably in Ed's brain. He waited for an hour until Flint had obviously finished, then he withdrew the microphone gently, climbed back over the balcony, and departed. This was definitely getting into deep waters, and only one man could swim in them—Brutus Lloyd.

CHAPTER III

Bacilli—X

THE morning after Ed's activities Dr. Lloyd turned up at the hospital during the usual visiting hours. A nurse creaking with starch led him down the white enameled corridor to Ralph's room and admitted him.

"Ten minutes," she proclaimed curtly, and locked the door behind her as she departed.

Ralph rose at the familiar bass voice, shook the small hand warmly.

"I've discovered something—" he started to say, but the scientist cut him short.

"*You* have discovered something! Ralph, you don't know what a discovery is. Leave that to me! I will admit—A, that your friend Ed Rutter was helpful, and—B, that I might not have thought of the idea otherwise. But my

genius provided the instruments . . . Listen!"

Lloyd went into a complete recounting of Ed's adventures the previous night, slapping the table with his umbrella for emphasis.

"*Fervet opus*—the work goes on busily," he finished in triumph.

"Seems to me," Ralph said slowly, "that there's only one explanation. This guy who you say is called Maravok, does exactly the same thing as Flint. He sits back and rests his head as Flint apparently does . . . Oh, I forgot. You don't know all the details about the laboratory, I can see. It's like this . . ."

"Telepathy!" Lloyd announced, when the story was over.

"Yes; telepathy. I was going to say that. There is no barrier to thought reaching into this other plane, is there?"

"None whatever. In fact we contact these planes in the normal way. We have all had the feeling of being watched in an empty room, or that 'I have been here before' sensation. I should say a trained telepathist might get into touch with other planes around us. More of us might see these planes if our eyes were as cockeyed as yours. But what is Flint *driving* at?" The umbrella stubbed the floor impatiently. "So far as I can make out from the record Ed made Flint is constantly taking down details of a medical experiment devised by this guy Maravok."

"Just the same as Maravok is taking details from Flint," Ralph puzzled. "It's an exchange of information. See here!" Ralph pulled his scratchpad from his pocket. "You take this and see if you can understand what it's all about. Most of it is in medical terms; stuff I've taken down from looking over Maravok's shoulder. Not very well written, I know, but maybe you can figure out something. His figuring seems to be pretty similar to ours and some of the terms may make sense to you. You know most things in medicine. . . ."

"*All* things in medicine," Lloyd corrected modestly, thrusting the pad in his pocket. "More I see of this the less I like it," he went on. "This fellow Flint is the least angelic person I've ever met. Telepathy, medical experiments, cultures, and so forth, when practised by him spell something sinister. However, maybe I'll find out something from these notes. I'll be back again next visitor's day and tell you how I've got on—also to learn anything you may have found out."

Ralph nodded. The door lock clicked as the nurse returned.

"I forgot to tell you," Lloyd said, as he turned to go. "Ed sent his regards, or his love, or something. . . . He's at work and couldn't make it. Ought to be his own master, like me. Much better! Well—*nil desperandum*. . . ."

LLOYD met no officials as he passed down the corridor, looking like an underpaid clerk. Though there was no law against his presence in the hospital he preferred if possible to avoid a direct contact with Dr. Flint. And he managed it successfully.

Half an hour later he was in his laboratory, perched like a gnome on a toadstool before his desk, poring over the scrawled notes of Ralph, then listening to the playback from the recording drums Ed had made. The more he pondered over them the grimmer his resolute little face became. Certain technical terms leapt readily to his mind, and where they were in a different language the interpretation, from the formula itself, left little doubt as to the actual meaning.

For two hours Brutus Lloyd brooded, stroking his J of hair at intervals. Thus Ed Rutter found him during the dinner hour when he slipped in to inquire as

to any progress that had been made.

"Anything fresh?" he asked quickly. "You saw Ralph?"

"Sure I saw him . . ." Lloyd slid from his stool and paced the laboratory slowly, hands deep in his smock pockets. Then looking up sharply he said, "I believe we've happened on something unimaginably big! We—or at any rate Ralph—have unearthed a medical plot which for sheer villainy beats anything I ever heard of! So far as I can make out this person Maravok is about as ruthless in his ideas as Flint himself. Both of them are—A, exchanging medical information; B, Flint is telling Maravok how to nurture cholera germs which are apparently unknown in this other space, and against which there is no protection; and—C, in return, Flint is finding out from Maravok how to cultivate a bacilli which will cause paralysis and death when introduced into the human system! It is a bacillus entirely unknown to us, and Flint would be able to start something as virulent as the Black Death!"

Ed's eyes opened wider. "Hell, we *have* found something!"

"*I* have found something," Lloyd averred, his eyelids dropping insolently.

"Well anyway, it's been found. But listen, why should two men telepathically exchange secrets concerning plagues in their respective lands? It isn't even sense. . . ."

"*Corruptio optimi pessima*—the corruption of the best is worst," Lloyd sighed. "Two clever men pawning genius for gross material gains. Look at the situation and what do we find? A—Flint is head of the hospital. B, he is in a fixed position which any qualified medico could take over. C, a Plague hits the country. An unknown, s m a s h i n g Plague! What then? Suppose he—Flint—were the only man with an antidote? And he *has* an antidote; I'm convinced of that. . . . The demand for his services would be colossal. His antidote, or serum, would net him millions of dollars. He, and whoever else is in on the job—there will be others I'm sure—would reap a fortune. You see? A deadly plan with human lives as the means to an end. Since Flint can probably cure all those who are impregnated he probably considers it is quite a safe move and not a murder risk. It's clever, though I'm loath to admit it. Damned clever!"

"Of course we tell the police?" Ed demanded.

"And tell them Ralph Marshall saw most of this in another plane of space?" Lloyd asked. "You overrate the imagination of the law, my friend. I could explain it to my friend Inspector Branson, but without solid proof even he might become a trifle annoyed. No, I intend to nurture the bacilli for myself first and find out their potentialities. If they turn out as I expect I shall hand the results to the police chemists to satisfy themselves. As for Flint, his recorded voice is enough to convict him. But we must be *sure!* I must also know exactly what his past history has been."

"I'd help you if I could," Ed said, rather anxiously. "As it is I'm tied up during the day, but I could go to the hospital again by night and try to—"

"Emphatically no!" Lloyd slapped his tiny hand on the bench. "You did it once and got away with it; next time you might not be so lucky. Anyway, I have all I need for evidence. If Flint gets wind of our plans it will put Ralph in a spot. Just leave things as they are and rely on me. Now get out. I've work to do."

LLOYD completed his medical experiments during the afternoon. In the evening Ed Rutter found himself gazing through the microscope upon

twirling, squirming life-forms of minute size drifting through thick fluid.

Lloyd gave a rather harsh laugh. "Bacilli-X," he commented grimly, handling the slide with care as he returned the culture to the glass phial. "There's enough in this tube to reduce the population of New York to paralysis. The devils multiply like hell . . ."

"What's next?" Ed asked briefly.

"Next we track down Flint's history from the medical records. . . ." Lloyd locked the culture phial away in the safe securely, then scrambled into his vast overcoat. He nodded toward the door.

They began with the library and studied Flint's career from *Who's Who*. His career had been distinguished anyway. He had degrees without number, but it was the nature of his various published works that gave an insight as to the real man. In three years he had published *Crime and Medicine, Possibilities of Thought Transference, Telepathy, Mind and Inter-Space, Criminal Action and Reaction,* and *The Psychology of Crime.*

Lloyd, satisfied, headed for the nearest booksellers before they closed and managed to buy every one of the books enumerated. Then he returned home. Without a word, an overlong pipe crackling in his mouth, he settled down to read. Ed started to read too because there was nothing else he could do. But he had no idea of what the diminutive scientist was looking for.

AS a matter of fact Lloyd read for three consecutive nights, probably the days too for all Ed knew to the contrary, before he seemed to arrive at a conclusion. On the third evening, shutting the last of the volumes with characteristic abruptness, he said:

"My conclusions are verified! Flint besides being a brilliant doctor is also a master-telepathist. He either has a mind ideally suited for transmission and reception of thought, or else he has learned the art better than any other man living in this world. Either way he has communicated with this other plane.

"But it is also clear that he has definite leanings towards a criminal state of mind. Like many men with too much scientific and medical knowledge he doesn't know where to stop. Not all of them have that spark of divine genius which makes them invaluable to the world. That is left to the few."

Lloyd licked his lips at the personal reflection and went on. "Though not actually possessing a police record, Flint certainly has been—and still is no doubt—in close contact with many underworld dives. He could not otherwise have written these remarkably clear treatises on the relationship between crime and medicine. He refers to several specialized types of criminals, whom he has obviously met. He gives fictitious names, of course. I fancy it might be possible, however, to track down the various people mentioned in these volumes by way of police department records. Tomorrow I'll see what Inspector Branson has to say about it. I'm ready to move now."

"But what do you hope to gain by tracking down these criminals?" Ed demanded. "It's Flint we want—not the subjects of his treatises."

Lloyd smiled tolerantly. "How do you imagine a Plague would begin, my friend? Do you think Flint would walk about sticking hypos into people? He would have agents scattered everywhere. What better place is there to recruit them than from the ranks of crime with which he is already in contact?"

"Funny! I never thought of that!"

"Quandoque bonus dormitat Rutterus!" Lloyd murmured. "Even the

worthy Rutter sleeps at times. Fortunately, I remain awake."

INSPECTOR BRANSON was cordial, but doubtful, when Lloyd tackled him in his office at headquarters the following morning. Ed, on a day's vacation to see the thing through, added his own corroboration. Not that Brutus Lloyd needed corroboration: he had it in the voice record and culture phial.

"Have this tested by your chemists and they'll find something they never knew about before which can paralyze the population of New York," Lloyd announced, holding the phial up. "Then have them check the formula by the voice record Ed Rutter here took. That can't damage your infernal red tape surely?"

Branson took the phial and laid it down gingerly. He looked at the little scientist thoughtfully, then finally he nodded.

"All right, Lloyd, I'll do that much. Frankly, though, I never quite know how to take you. You get the most extraordinary scientific ideas sometimes and—"

"And they are always right," Lloyd finished calmly. "This is no exception. However, I am not a detective—in the sense of snooping after criminals, I mean. I am a scientist. That is why I have to enlist your aid in tracing the living originals of the descriptions given in these books by Flint. You'll find them blue-penciled. You can manage that?"

"Don't see why not." Branson flipped the pages. "Take about a couple of hours. Suppose we manage it? What then?"

Lloyd picked up his umbrella. "I'll tell you in a couple of hours. Meantime some lunch is indicated. Let's go, Ed."

They returned at the appointed time to find Branson ready with a pile of record cards.

"Ten of 'em we've easily identified from description and surroundings," he announced. "The rest aren't so easy. These ten are always under police observation, anyway."

"You could rope them in for questioning?" Lloyd inquired.

"Nothing easier."

"Then go to it. You'll find one of them will crack wide open and admit he's in contact with Flint. If one of them does that the rest is easy. You can round up the others in no time—if it's necessary. It's probable that Flint hasn't started circulating his bacilli, yet, and I don't suppose these crooks will know the real issue anyway."

"I hope," Branson said, pressing a button on his desk, "you're all straight about this, Lloyd. After all, basing your original theory on a man who can see into another space is a bit tall, even for you."

"*Ab uno disce omnes,* Branson," Lloyd responded, beaming. "From a single case infer the whole."

"You'd better be right," Branson observed grimly.

Lloyd stroked his J pensively. "I'm sitting right here until those crooks are roped in, if I have to wait a week. Once you're satisfied, Branson, a warrant for Flint's arrest can follow pronto."

CHAPTER IV

Scientist of Another World

RALPH MARSHALL wondered more than once what Ed and Lloyd were doing as the days slipped by. At least he had complete confidence in them, which was everything. For his own part he did not relax his efforts in the slightest: in fact he could not do so

very well since he was obliged to look into the laboratory of Maravok every time he took his glasses off.

As on the other occasions, Maravok spent each night doing his telepathic work and making notes. During the daytime he made medical experiments and also put the finishing touches to a device like a metronome. On the fourth night he had the "metronome" finished, stood watching it pensively.

Ralph moved across his cell, the better to see what was going on. He stood gazing at the inverted pendulum as it swung rhythmically to and fro—but it struck him as curious that when he moved towards it—actually across his own cell of course — the pendulum ticked all the faster and increased its swinging to nearly double.

A sense of unexpected danger touched him. He saw Maravok's cruel face set in granite lines. He turned sharply, gazed unseeingly at Ralph and then round the laboratory. Ralph backed away instinctively and the metronome resumed its former leisurely beat. He felt—he knew—that that device was somehow geared to register alien vision in the laboratory. In truth it was the device of which Maravok had already spoken telepathically to Flint.

Ralph sat down to watch, clenching and unclenching his fists. He saw Maravok settle in his chair and lie back to concentrate. As he remained motionless various thoughts twirled through Ralph's brain. He knew quite well by this time that the scientist was planning something pretty diabolical from a medical standpoint, something that was no doubt destined to endanger his own people as much as Flint's scheme would endanger the people of the everyday world.

But how was it possible to get at the man from another space? Unless, perhaps, the metronome . . . ? That, so far, was the only thing Ralph had seen which was capable of reacting between planes. Probably it was accomplished by the vibration of bodily aura passing between molecular spaces. That was quite a logical possibility, anyway. If so . . .

Ralph looked at the instrument again. It was not fastened down in any way. The shelf on which it stood was directly over an array of bottles of fragile glass containing all manner of chemicals. Some of them were probably explosive if mixed together. Certainly there were numerous acids.

Ralph began to smile to himself grimly. Perhaps there *was* a way to destroy this other-world laboratory and Maravok with it. Back of Ralph's mind was the remembrance of the alarm clock on the mantelshelf in the living room at home—the thing that had slid itself along by its own vibration every time it had rung. Suppose that the metronome could be made to vibrate strongly enough to slide over the edge of the shelf? It *might,* if he went close enough, and Maravok was sitting with his eyes closed, concentrating.

Ralph rose up and walked across the cell slowly, watching the instrument immediately increase its rate of pendulum swing. Closer—and it still increased. He reached out both his hands and waved them in the space where he imagined the thing must be. That action, as the electricity from his body passed across the gap, made the pendulum become a mist. The instrument, even as he had hoped, began to tremble and slide uneasily along the shelf towards the edge.

AT that moment Maravok opened his eyes and looked up. He catapulted out of his chair, arm outthrust, but he was a shade too late. The metronome slipped into the midst of the glass bot-

tles below, and in his frantic urgency Maravok missed catching it completely.

Ralph stood watching the results of his handiwork—but he did not watch for long. The acid jars spilled their fuming contents into saline looking chemicals. There was a sudden unholy spurt of flame and deep yellow smoke. Almost instantly it was followed by a blinding flash of incandescent light. No noise, not a sound, but the glare and vibration hurled Ralph back across the cell as though he had been thrown. His eyes twinged and stabbed as though rammed with white-hot needles. He could not see the laboratory any more, only a spotted curtain of chaotic dark.

Gasping with pain, clawing at his eyes, he scrambled to his feet. He had hardly done so before the doorlock clicked and somebody came in.

"Who's there?" he demanded sharply, staring into the dark.

"Just me, Mr. Marshall." It was the unmistakable voice of Flint. "I thought perhaps a little chat might be advantageous. You see, I only just learned this evening how completely I have played into your hands. I realize that you know of my telepathic activities with Maravok, whom you killed only a moment or two ago by some method or other . . ."

RALPH stood rigid, his pain abating. He tried to place the position of the voice. It was by the door. He clenched his fists and said nothing.

"Tonight Maravok learned for the first time that there were other eyes watching," Flint went on. "His instrument revealed it. It could only be you. Since you must obviously know most of my plans I cannot imagine anything better than for you to be the first victim of the plague that is about to strike the continent. I have everything ready. My agents will be advised. Right here in my hand is a hypodermic, one injection from which will insure your death within fifteen minutes. Since countless others will be affected within a few hours, and since only I possess the antidote, it will obviously not be a case of murder but death from an unknown disease. Simple, isn't it? Had I known you knew so much I might have done it sooner—"

"Damn you!" Ralph roared suddenly, and charged for where he knew the table was. He seized it, slammed it forward to the position of the doorway, blundered round it. Flint gasped with pain, then his voice came again, thick with fury.

"You can't get out of here, Marshall! Not with those warped eyes of yours! You're as blind as a bat, and I know it! You can't get out, I tell you—"

Ralph clawed suddenly at the door handle, then he stopped at a grip on his arm. Instantly he whirled up his fist into the dark and felt it impact bone. Flint went staggering back across the room, tripped, and dropped his length, the syringe flying out of his hand.

Ralph's sharp ears heard it tinkle on the woodwork round the carpet, and that was enough for him. He plunged forward until he stumbled over Flint. Seizing his neck he raised him, hammered home his right fist time and time again into the doctor's face . . . until a sudden smashing blow in the jaw stopped him for a moment.

He lashed out again, missed, and another blow hit him in the face. It was followed by one over the head which laid him flat on the floor. He felt his senses reeling. A weird miscellany of noises came to him. The sound of running feet, the desperate breathing of Flint and the scratching of his hands as he clawed for the syringe—

Then for Ralph the sounds faded away into silence.

RALPH returned to consciousness to the knowledge of a throbbing head and a bandage across his eyes once again. He stirred slowly and the voices of Ed Rutter and Dr. Lloyd reached him simultaneously.

"Take it easy, Ralph; you're O.K.," Ed said. "But we were only just in time."

"In—in time? How? Why?"

"Thanks to me the police came to arrest Flint," Lloyd said modestly, after briefly recounting the earlier events. "We couldn't find him in his study, but nurses had seen him going toward your room. So we followed. We got him just before he could sink a hypo into you."

Ralph relaxed with a sigh. "Then that's settled! I cleaned up Maravok and you cleaned up Flint!"

"What!" Lloyd cried. "You mean you did something to cause Maravok to be destroyed?"

"Sure I did. . . ." Ralph related the full facts. At the end of it Lloyd drew a deep breath.

"This explains much!" he exclaimed. "I had a look at your eyes when you were unconscious and my tests showed they were almost normal. Something had shifted them out of that other plane to the normal one, but even my wide experience could not imagine what it could be. I thought it might have been the result of the blow Flint gave you when he hit you with a chair. Now I know the truth. The blast of flame in that other plane gave the necessary optical shock to slam your vision right back to normal after a brief spell of blindness, which you are now undergoing. In two days' time you'll be seeing as well as ever again."

"You mean it?" Ralph cried eagerly, sitting up again.

Lloyd glanced at Ed and smiled. "Ralph does not know it," he observed gravely, "but *stat magni nominis umbra* . . . He stands in the shadow of a mighty name . . . And the owner of that name never makes mistakes."

The little scientist was right. Two weeks later Ralph was back on his Shaft.

« RADIO ACTIVE COCKTAIL »

PHYSICIST and physician have collaborated on a recipe for a new drink. Ingredients: sodium phosphate and water. (Shake well in a cyclotron.) *The resulting radioactive cocktail is a cure for deadly leukemia!*

Leukemia is a cancer-like disease of the white corpuscles of the blood, invariably fatal until recently, when X-rays were found to check its progress. But patients became immune to X-ray treatment—hence the new recipe. Don't think, however, that you just step in somewhere and ask for a shot of Na_2HPO_4! It's not as simple as all that.

Basis of the treatment was the discovery that, bombarded with neutrons produced in the atom-smashing cyclotron, stable elements become radioactive! Thus sodium phosphate, normally used in laxatives and as a fixing agent in textile dyeing, could be made to serve simultaneously as a cool drink—and a portable, "self-liquidating" X-ray installation! Results so far have been excellent, but it is not yet known whether cures will be permanent. Leukemia victims may have to continue with daily tippling.

In that case Geiger counters probably will be used to determine their needs. The Geiger counter is an instrument to detect natural or artificially induced radioactive emanations, which set it to rattling off a series of clicks. Mice given the leukemia cocktail were tested in this manner to check how thoroughly their bodies had been permeated by the curative substance.

Or, to take another example—since many substances are being made radioactive for various purposes—suppose you wish a check-up on your circulation. Take a pull on this special radioactive salt water cocktail and hold on to the Geiger counter. If your circulation is all right, in twenty minutes—the normal time for blood to reach the hands—your fingers will suddenly sound like castanets!

(*Continued from page 7*)

JUST in case you haven't noticed the fact, one of the most talked-of science fiction novels in years, and an unpublished (up to now) novel at that, is Stanley G. Weinbaum's "The New Adam." This book, presented by the publishers of AMAZING STORIES after years of popular demand on the part of the readers of science fiction, is at last available to you. Of all Weinbaum's works, this was undoubtedly his favorite, and one that he didn't intend to publish, since he wrote it mainly for his own enjoyment. But with an author's natural pride in an excellent work, he gave manuscripts to various fans, and the inevitable result was the spreading of the word of a science fiction gem unpublished and hidden from the light of day. The hue and cry was taken up by other fans, and it is amazing when we consider that they were demanding a story they knew nothing about, except that Weinbaum wrote it. Which was enough, apparently. Truly he was a great favorite among readers of science fiction. You'll find an announcement elsewhere in this issue. And we think you'll be doing yourself a real favor by getting a copy for yourself. It's a story of stories, and it's *real* science fiction.

"Come to the Fair? Not us. Last time we came to Earth it started a panic!"

HAVE you noticed the many new writers who are appearing in science fiction today? We have presented quite a few in recent months, two of them in this issue. Not all of these newcomers are new writers, but writers who have been writing for other fields, and who now have noticed the continual advancement of science fiction pulp magazines. We think this means a whole lot, and it seems significant that where some years ago, science fiction writers graduated into other fields, today writers in other fields are graduating into science fiction. It makes us feel pretty good.

MR. JAMES HURT, of Seattle, Washington, writes your editor as follows: "In your Sept., 1939 issue, the story *Rocket Race to Luna* has the hero dash out to the moon and back to earth in the record breaking time of forty-eight hours; said hero being so badly battered up during the trip that it took him over a week to recuperate. Those of us who have gone through high school were taught that for constant accelerated motion the equation that held was S equals ½ AT^2, where S equals distance in feet, A equals acceleration in feet sec/sec, and T equals time in seconds. Using an effective acceleration of one gravity, a rocket could travel to the moon, land on it, and return to earth in less than EIGHT HOURS. A trip to Mars could be made in LESS THAN TWO DAYS! The longest possible trip to Mars where we semi-circle the sun, would take less than SIX days! Your ships are too slow!

TO your editors, that letter was very interesting indeed. Maybe it could be a good idea for some of our authors to sit down and indulge in a little mathematics. It might blow a lot of the heretofore accepted maxims of space travel to smithereens. This is the first time a reader has called our ships slow, and it rather piques us to realize he's right!

ON our back cover this month we have the future application of suspended animation, which isn't so amazing in the light of present day experiments and actual cases of using freezing processes to slow down animation for the purpose of curing disease. It may also mean greatly extending the life period of man.

REMEMBER author David V. Reed, who won a prize in the Merit Award with his "Where Is Roger Davis?" Well, Mr. Reed, whose real name is Vern, is now connected with AMAZING STORIES' staff, and if you've noticed any improvement in the stories in this issue, it is due to his astute selection, and his very capable editorial touch.

AND that just about brings us to the end of another editorial outburst, and the end of our New Year's edition of AMAZING STORIES. We'll be back again next month with more of the same, and with some mighty fine stories. -*Rap.*

Slaves

BY FREDERIC ARNOLD KUMMER, JR

Terror struck into the hearts of all aboard the space ship as the weird music came out of the void

A SHRILL strident voice filled the control room with noise. "Damn, damn, damn," it howled. "Work, you dirty blasters, work! Full rockets ahead!"

"Quiet, Tycho!" Chance said sharply. Setting controls on the robot pilot, he drew a handful of *fayeh* seeds from his pocket, threw them into the cage on the navigator's table. At once the scrawny purple Martian parrot ceased its screaming, began to peck

# of Rhythm

The Saturnian writhed in agony as Chance pounded lustily

greedily at the seeds, pausing from time to time to render hoarse snatches of "The Rocketeer's Revenge," or choice excerpts from "The Wife of the Man in the Moon."

Martin Chance grinned. He had gotten Tycho from a miner in the crater of the same name . . . and lunar miners had a vocabulary which commanded respect the length and breadth of the solar system. Chance was about to return to the controls when footsteps sounded in the corridor, and a round, nervous little man entered the control room, evidently in haste.

"Captain Chance!" he exclaimed. "I thought I heard noises . . ."

"Only Tycho here, Mr. Holden." Chance motioned to the parrot. "He was kicking up a fuss for his dinner. Always does that."

"Damned nuisance!" Mr. Holden grunted irritably. Tycho cocked his

head on one side, regarded Mr. Holden quizzically.

"Damned nuisance!" he shrilled.

Chance stifled a grin, threw a cloth over the cage. Then, suddenly serious, he faced the *Astra's* owner.

"Been thinking, sir," he said. "About our course. I admit I signed for two years, no questions asked, but it seems pretty obvious we're heading for Saturn. And you know what they say about that planet."

Mr. Holden's pale eyes lingered on Chance's lean hawk's face.

"All right!" he challenged. "What do they say?"

"Music, coming through space, which sound waves can't cross, to enter ships. Eerie, inhuman music . . ."

"Huh!" Mr. Holden laughed scornfully. "Spacemen's superstitions! I signed you as a captain and adventurer who'd take a ship to hell and back if ordered! And now you turn out to be as bad as the rest of these superstitious soot-hogs!"

COLOR drained from Chance's face. Of all terms, spacemen detest being referred to as soot-hogs, since the filthy task of cleaning carbon from the tubes of rocket-ships is done by half-caste, undersized Martians, on a plane with the chimney-sweeps of ancient terrestrial legend. Chance counted ten slowly, until his fists relaxed.

"I didn't say I believed these stories," he said finally, choosing his words carefully. "Even though most such yarns are based on fact. I merely asked where we're going, and why. So that if these mutterings among the men should come to a head, I'd be able to reason with them. However . . ." Shrugging, he turned to the controls.

Mr. Holden stared through the observation port at the ringed planet ahead, tossed his cigar into the sand-box.

"All right," he said slowly. "If it'll make you feel any better to know where we're bound, I'll tell you. Ever hear of Janice Kent?"

"Janice Kent?" Martin Chance nodded. Few people hadn't heard of her. She was the newscaster's delight, glamor girl number one of the solar system, reckless rocket pilot, and heiress of the Kent Spacecraft millions. Chance recalled the pictures of her that had flooded the television lanes when she left earth on the audacious expedition to Saturn two years before. A sleek yellow helmet of hair, snapping blue eyes, a band of freckles over her tip-tilted nose, man's shirt and whipcords that somehow emphasized her femininity. In two years there had been no trace, no hint, of what had befallen the madcap expedition.

"You remember, then?" Holden grunted. "Well, Captain Chance, it just so happens that Miss Kent owns the controlling interest in Spacecraft. And without her we can't elect officers, make any radical shifts in policy. Under the law she's got to be missing seven years before she's officially declared dead. Seven years during which Spacecraft must mark time, avoid any big decisions, any changes! It's costing us a fortune! So the minority stockholders got together, put up the money to hire this yacht, elected me as their representative. I'm to either bring Miss Kent home, or find proof of her death. And I'll do it if I have to comb every square inch of Saturn's surface! If the men don't like the idea of heading for Saturn, that's just too bad! As for this talk of music in empty space, that's a lot of stupid, nonsensical twaddle . . ." John Holden broke off, his rotund face falling into sagging, putty-like lines. Stiff as a run-down robot, he stood there, listening.

Martin Chance froze. A noise was

echoing through the control room . . . a noise the like of which he had never before heard. Very faint, seemingly far-off, it was a strange monotonous rhythm, a droning cadence, vaguely melodic. On and on it hummed, this weird barbaric tempo, never varying. Eerie, inhuman in quality, it was like a chant of disembodied spirits, a call from beyond the end of time.

"Good God!" Mr. Holden whispered.

CHANCE said nothing. His eyes swept the control room, took note of the disconnected radio. Then, as though to satisfy himself, he removed several of its tubes and wires; the throbbing melody did not cease. It seemed to come from all sides, from the glittering control panel, from the iron-plated floor, from the dial-covered walls. Chance even snatched the cloth from the parrot's cage, but Tycho sat cowering on his perch as though frightened by the unknown sound.

"Music!" the *Astra's* captain muttered. "It's not on board! There's nothing on this ship could make such a sound! And sound waves can't travel through the ether!"

Mr. Holden nodded weakly; all his confidence, aggressiveness, seemed to have left him. Before he could speak, however, a rush of feet sounded along the companionway and a crowd of panicky spacehands burst into the control room.

"Captain Chance!" Wallace, the little radio operator, pushed forward. "You hear it? It ain't according to nature's laws that music should come out of nowhere, board this ship! God knows what'll come next! We've had enough of this! Put about, while we can!"

"Put about?" Chance laughed scornfully. "Because of a little noise? And you call yourselves spacemen! We're going on!"

"No!" A squat, powerful blaster plunged forward, his face desperate. "The ship's haunted! Who knows what devil's powers lie out here around Saturn! And us defying a Warning! I won't . . ."

With a whip-like crack Chance's muscular fist met the big man's jaw. Gasping, the blaster toppled to the floor, limp, inert.

"Get back to your quarters!" Chance said evenly. "We're not turning from our course, devil's music or no devil's music!"

For a long moment there was silence, broken only by the weird, pulsating harmony, monotonous, macabre, inexorable, like the throbbing of some giant heart. Then Grogan, the quartermaster, prodded the fallen blaster with the toe of his boot.

"Up, ye scut!" he chuckled. "Sure, you're missing the foinist part of the concert! 'Tis not every day we've a banshee to serenade us!"

A ragged laugh went up from the spacehands. With forced bravado they picked up the dazed blaster, carried him from the control room. When they had gone, Holden spoke, raising his voice to make it heard above the flowing, insistent rhythm.

"What . . . what was it?" he muttered. "This crazy music. . . !"

"Just spacemen's superstitions," Chance grinned. "Stupid, nonsensical twaddle, eh, Tycho?"

The parrot squawked, shrilly, flapped his wings.

"Damn, damn, damn!" he screamed. "Full rockets ahead!"

CHAPTER II

Captured by Saturnians

FOR two day the *Astra* swept toward Saturn, a flickering silver mote in the dark infinity of space. During those

forty-eight hours the men aboard her had become grey, shaking wraiths, tortured by the ceaseless droning rhythm. Nights without sleep, the humming, maddening chorus tearing at their nerves, the fear of the unknown worrying them. As the ship had drawn nearer Saturn, the eerie melody had grown louder, while the wads of cotton they used to plug their ears gave little help. The rhythm seemed to vibrate from the floor, the bulkheads, everything they touched. Already they had discovered little Wallace, the radio operator, pounding the walls with his fists, begging the music to stop. Several others seemed on the verge of a similar breakdown. Even the irrepressible Tycho had ceased ionizing the air with profanity, lay huddled upon the bottom of the cage, as though physically beaten by the sound.

As to the drone itself, Chance found it still a mystery. More a tempo than actual melody, it seemed to have a regular cycle, then repeat itself, like some celestial music-box, never ceasing. And it was something deeper than mere sound; the hammering cadence seemed to permeate his whole being. Now and again Chance would find himself unconsciously moving or speaking in time with the measured steady tempo. Sometimes he had felt he wanted to breathe in time to it, have his heart beat in its rhythm, live in accordance to the sounds.

Only once had the throbbing chorus changed. That was when the *Astra* had swept over the great ring of satellites that girdled the sixth planet. Then Chance had fancied he heard a break in the weird harmony, a shrill whining discord. As swiftly as it had come, the sound died out, leaving only the strange gripping cadence. And Chance, busy with the delicate operation of landing, had had no time to puzzle over it.

Now, bent over the control panel, he kept his eyes on the row of dials. No way to see the ground below, what with the dazzling flare of the landing rockets. Chance's gaze flicked toward Grogan, the broad-shouldered quartermaster, and Holden, a harassed, bleak-faced spectre, standing behind him. With one last glance at the gravity indicator, he pulled the rocket switch. A slight bump and the *Astra* rested on Saturnian soil.

"Landed, sir. Any orders?" Chance's tones were chilly. He had been markedly polite toward Holden of late.

The *Astra's* owner peered through the observation port. Sight of Saturn's gloomy, barren surface depressed him.

"We'll go out and have a look," he announced. "What do the tests show?"

Chance looked at the gravity indicator.

"Not so bad as I thought," he muttered. "We'll be able to move. How about air, Grogan?"

The mate was bent over an inlet valve that had admitted Saturn's atmosphere into a spectroscopic chamber.

"Good bit of free hydrogen*, sorr," he grunted. "Still, I don't think we'll need spacesuits. It's cold out there."

"Then the air's okay. Excellent." Holden rubbed eager hands. "We'll go out at once."

Chance frowned. Air and gravity tests were elementary. Ships on strange planets usually took tests for days before their crews ventured out. They hadn't discovered the cause of the throbbing, pulsating rhythm yet, either. And there might be life, unpleasant life, among those shadows, those bold rocks and gnarled shrubs.

"Don't you think we'd better make further tests?" he asked. "No sense being in too big a hurry . . ."

* To be expected with the planet's critical velocity 22 miles per second, mean value, and hydrogen's maximum molecular speed at zero Centigrade only 7.4 miles a second.—Ed.

"No hurry!" Holden exploded. "With millions to be made in Kent Spacecraft preferred? Soon as we get word of Miss Kent, proof of her life or death, we're set. Public confidence will be restored when they learn the company's hands are no longer tied by her absence and the stock'll go sky-high. Once I get inside the Heaviside layer with that proof I'll radio my associates in code to buy, and we'll clean up! And you say there's no hurry! Of course if you're afraid to go out . . ."

Grogan, watching Chance's knotted fists, waited for the explosion. Once again it didn't come. Chance had strict ideas of discipline and Holden, as owner, was his superior. A long minute's wait and the veins in his temple subsided.

"I am under your orders, sir," he said tightly.

And as Holden left the room, Tycho's strident voice rose above the rushing music in mocking repetition.

"Under your orders, sir! Your orders, sir!"

IT was a grim, tight-lipped Chance who swung through the air-lock after Holden a half-hour later. Both men, wrapped in heavy, fur-lined suits, resembled bulky phantoms in the ghostly, vague half-light.

They were, as near as Chance could make out, on a barren rock-strewn plain, dotted with huge boulders, patches of ice, and clumps of strange grey-leafed vegetation. The air was heavy with stifling gases, but breathable. The gravity dragged them down, set their hearts pounding.

Chance followed Holden's ungainly figure with more than normal caution. On this, a new, unknown world, anything could happen. Even now they might be breathing in deadly germs. And that crazy pounding melody, hammering on, and on, tearing at one's nerves . . .

Holden was leading the way across the plain. Behind them the *Astra* was only a phantom ship in the misty gloom. The financier, Chance reflected, probably counted on Janice Kent's being within a mile or so from where they had landed. In which case he was an optimist. Out of several billion square miles he expected to find a girl missing two years. A girl who may never even have reached Saturn. Who was probably dead . . . Stanley and Livingstone stuff, only infinitely worse. With all the immense surface of Saturn, there wasn't a possibility . . .

"Chance! Chance, come here!" It was Holden's voice, rising above the eternal rhythm.

The captain ran, fighting the gravitational drag. Holden was standing at the foot of a slight rise.

"Look!" he said, pointing.

Chance stared. Upon the crest of the ridge lay a gleaming metal tin, a synthetic food container. Upon it, in big red letters Chance could make out the words, "S. S. Martian."

"You see?" Holden cried. "The *Martian!* Janice Kent's ship!"

Chance stared at the tin. In spite of the moisture in the air it shone brightly.

"Hasn't been there long," he said slowly. "No rust. Wonder why it's parked up on that ridge?"

"So we'd see it, of course." Holden was impatient. "Probably contains a message. We'll find out!" He started up the slope.

"Wait a minute!" Chance caught his arm. "I don't just like the looks of this. It might be a trap . . ."

Holden broke away from him. "Yellow!" he spat out. "Yellow soot-hog!"

And then Chance exploded. His language would have put Tycho to shame.

" . . . damned, bull-headed idiot!"

he concluded. "Can't you see that metal tarnishes in a few minutes in this atmosphere? That the can must have been put there *after we landed?* To draw us . . ." The words died on Chance's lips. He swallowed hard, staring.

Figures were appearing over the crest of the rise . . . baroque, unearthly figures. Twice human size, their bodies were covered with a pale, silvery fur, yet were somehow graceful, well-proportioned. At first glance their features, with sunken toothless mouths, waving antennae, seemed hideous, but on closer inspection a grave dignity was manifest. In spite of all their strangeness, the giants were indefinably human.

"Good . . . God!" Holden's hand fumbled for the hilt of his flame gun. Then abruptly he froze, rigid.

At that moment Chance felt it . . . a gripping mind-force that pinioned his brain, held him immobile, helpless.

"Telepaths!" he grated. "And us walking into this like a Sunday school picnic!" Then, humanly enough, "Didn't I tell you, Holden . . ."

AT sound of his voice the tall Saturnians had halted, their faces drawn, their antennae twitching. The thought-field grew in intensity and Chance felt himself completely dominated, unable to speak. A queer sensation of having a dual personality possessed him. His senses were able to record events, his mind could think, but another will held him powerless. Raging inwardly, he stood frozen, watching the towering figures descend the slope. There was, he observed, something almost robot-like about them. They moved in perfect time to the thundering cosmic rhythm that rolled in measured, monotonous cadence throughout this world of Saturn. Every movement, every gesture, followed the throbbing beat as some grotesque *ballet comique* follows the music of an orchestra. Human robots, moving, living, in time to a celestial harmony!

The figures were near, now. Holden's face was like putty. He seemed struggling in vain to speak. Suddenly he and Chance felt themselves turn, walk woodenly toward the *Astra*. The captain swore mentally. He had no control over his actions. He remembered the childhood trick of standing in a doorway with the backs of both hands pressed tightly against the sides of the entrance. Upon stepping out of the doorway your arms rose automatically. That was how it felt now, only it wasn't just his arms . . . his whole body was moving at someone else's volition. So was Holden's. From the corner of his eye Chance could see the Saturnians dropping into the shadow of the bushes, tall rocks. Ahead, the *Astra* loomed through the swirling mists.

Chance felt himself pause before the ship. Grogan and several others were clustered behind a porthole. Now he felt himself beckoning to them, motioning for them to come out. He fought it bitterly, but to no avail. A moment's wait and the airlock swung open. The quartermaster, followed by the rest of the crew, climbed down the metal ladder.

"What's up?" Grogan exclaimed. "You look like a ghost, sorr! We . . ."

The men from the vessel went rigid under the force of surging will-power. In silence the huge, furry Saturnians were emerging from concealment, their antennae waving. Stiffly, like sleepwalkers, the row of earthmen commenced to move forward, escorted by their captors. And the deafening cosmic melody hammered on, deafeningly, pounding the men like blows from a padded sledge.

THE journey across the gloomy windswept plain seemed interminable. Rocks, scrub vegetation of a bizarre, alien variety, occasional patches of snow . . . the earthmen, pale automatons, the huge Saturnians moving, quite unconsciously it seemed, in time to the roaring, ragged rhythm.

An hour's walking brought them to the city. In the center of a plain almost Mars-like with its red iron rust, a cluster of massive spires and towers thrust at the grey sky. Domes, bridges, ramps made an intricate filigree of stone, grim, solid, age-old. Sweeping like some huge mercury arc above the city was a curved tube of immense proportions, its ends disappearing into the ground on each side. The tube glowed whitely, giving off light and, apparently heat. Molten lava from the planet's core, Chance decided, run above the city to warm it, then forced below to be reheated. He eyed their tall furry captors with new respect. He had fancied them primitive, backward . . .

The interior of the city was another revelation. It seemed built entirely of a soft yielding material, very tough, not unlike a hard rubber. Walls, streets, buildings, all were of this plastic, deadening footfalls, echoes. Except for the eternal sourceless rhythm, the city was like a tomb. Not a sound from the crowds of Saturnians who lined the streets, though the air was full of thoughts . . . blurred, incomprehensible thoughts that brought no clear pictures to the earthmen's minds.

The Saturnian guards swung into a big building to the right. Entering the hall, Chance felt the mental pressure relax. He turned his head, experimentally, found that he could move. But like the others behind him, he had been disarmed. A group of figures strode from the shadows of the hall. Six tall Saturnians . . . and a slim, yellow-haired earth-girl! More, the girl was smiling, nodding at her grotesque companions as though they were life-long friends!

"Miss Kent!" Chance burst out. "This *is* luck! If you'll just tell these beings that we're a rescue party come to take you home . . ."

He broke off, staring. The girl had cringed at his words, fallen back with an expression of pain on her face. Her companions reacted similarly, their antennae twitching ominously. Chance was about to speak again when a surge of mental power wiped his lips clean of speech. His hands, however, were free.

The girl stepped forward, her movements timed to the strange cosmic cadence, placed two fingers upon Chance's wrist. Puzzled, the *Astra's* captain felt her fingers pressing in a succession of short and long taps. Suddenly it dawned on him. Morse! Just as it was used in light-signals to bridge great gaps in space. He began to translate her message.

"Do not speak. Noise distorts the life-tempo. The sound of your rockets on landing created havoc. I was like you when I reached Saturn. The *Martian* crashed and I alone survived. But during the months while they nursed me back to health, the great rhythm dominated me and I have now realized that life in perfect, regular tempo is far preferable to my previous existence which was disjointed, unharmonious, full of harsh noises and actions. Here, everything moves in accord, in perfect flowing time. You are at present a discord. It will be necessary to keep you and your men apart for a few earth-weeks. By that time you will have fallen inevitably into the rhythm of Saturn and will no longer wish to leave."

"Suppose we resist?" Chance tapped

out on her wrist. "Suppose we don't want to live in time to the . . . melody?"

"The power of their minds makes resistance impossible," she replied. "You cannot be permitted to leave since the noise of your rockets creates terrible discords, injures everyone within a radius of miles. When your ship was sighted, I was sent for from Etar, another city far away, near where the *Martian* crashed, and advised setting the trap which enabled us to capture you. Like myself you will be taught telepathic communication, far superior to harsh sound-waves. You will find that this is the only true life."

Chance groaned inwardly, glanced at his companions. They were staring at him questioningly, unable to speak. He had no chance to explain. Under the force of the inexorable wills he found himself turning, leading the others from the hall. Out into the street, along it until they reached a big grey building with curiously barred windows. A prison of some sort . . . To Chance, the crazy cosmic melody was like mocking laughter.

CHAPTER III

The Rhythm of Peace

THE room occupied by Chance and Holden was narrow, vaguely illuminated by the light that poured through the tiny window. Chance, watching Holden pace the floor, suddenly sprang to his feet.

"Stop it!" he said curtly. "You're beginning to keep step to that damn music!"

"What of it?" Holden snapped with sudden irritation. "I don't like your tone, Mr. Chance! I'm in command of this expedition . . ."

"You're in command of the *Astra*," Chance reminded him. "And right now we're not on board. Your bungling got us into this mess and I'm not counting on your getting us out. Now sit down and keep quiet."

For a long moment Holden stared, then with a bellow of rage he plunged at Chance.

The captain's fist only traveled six inches but Holden landed heavily against the wall, lay there clutching a bruised jaw.

"I'll have you broken for this, Chance!" he muttered. "It'll be irons for you when we get back aboard the yacht! Insubordination . . ."

"When we get back aboard the yacht!" Chance laughed harshly. "We'll be lucky if we ever see it again! You don't realize what we're up against! A minute ago you were pacing the floor unconsciously in time to the rhythm. Know what that means? It means the tempo of Saturn's beginning to get you! Janice Kent said that in a few weeks we'd fall into it. Just like she did. And we are! Unless we fight . . ."

Holden didn't reply, maintaining his sullen silence.

Ignoring him, Chance peered through the tiny window. The streets below, warm, well-lit by the great arc that swept over the city, were peopled by the tall men of Saturn, all moving in perfect time to the throbbing music. Every gesture, every motion . . . He felt a sudden desire to give up the struggle, to yield to the insistent melody. To breathe, to move, to think, in time . . . Abruptly he squared his shoulders.

"Damn, damn, damn, as Tycho would say!" He spoke aloud, hoping that the sound of his voice would break the spell of the mighty rhythm. "Bet that dizzy bird's half-starved, too! I'm beginning to realize how he feels,

being cooped up in a cage! Who said that stone walls do not a prison make nor iron bars" . . . he paused . . . "iron bars . . ."

ALL at once Chance nodded, understandingly. "Iron! And to think I didn't realize!"

He whirled on the sullen Holden. "Look here! We know sound waves can't cross space! Yet we know this crazy melody entered the iron hull of the *Astra!* Here in this cell it's louder near the door than over in the corner! You hear! That means magnetism! Magnetism, vibrating all iron and steel until they give off sound! Like a telephone receiver! Iron, mined and cast, iron, still in the earth, all vibrating! The red-rust color of the soil proves there are large deposits on this planet . . . each particle fluctuating to give off sound! No wonder we heard it aboard the *Astra,* no wonder it seems to come from all directions! And the reason for the varying magnetic flux is equally simple! Saturn's the only world with rings of satellites! Now suppose those thousands of chunks, of all sizes, were also iron! Whirling, they'd cut the lines of force that run outside the planet, from magnetic pole to magnetic pole, set up a changing flux that would cause every ounce of iron within range, whether mined or still in the earth, to vibrate, give off sound. The planet's iron core, even, filling the air with noise! Catch on? It's Saturn's rings that cause the music. Millions of tiny iron satellites, acting like the holes in a music roll, to create the rhythm!"

"So what?" Holden snapped. "All we've got to do is stop the rings of satellites from revolving, I suppose. Nothing to it."

"Never **mind** the wisecracks," Chance exclaimed impatiently. "I'm beginning to get a clear picture of all this! No wonder the Saturnians have adjusted their lives to it! Heard this crazy rhythm from the moment they were born. No doubt it wears a channel in their brains until they can't do without it. Even outsiders must succumb to the music in time."

"Crack-pot theories!" **Holden** sneered. "Why . . ."

"I don't know. But I'm beginning to understand. Look, Holden! Suppose you worked in a factory where machines rattled and roared. The first day it would be deafening. But after a time you'd never notice it. In fact if the machines suddenly stopped, the silence would startle you, just as a person accustomed to quiet would be startled if there was a sudden noise behind him. It's the adaptability of living organisms. This world is like a regiment of soldiers marching to the music of a band. Let the band strike one false note and the whole regiment is thrown into confusion, out of step. That's what we've done with the roar of our rockets, the sound of our voices, the actual unrhythmic gestures we make."

"All right," Holden challenged. "But what about Janice Kent? She wasn't born in this world. Why is she a slave to the rhythm?"

"That's the effect of music."* Chance frowned. "Whatever the tempo, you find yourself beginning to yield to it."

"Cheerful prospect!" Holden grated. "Meaning we'll become like the Saturnians. Slaves of melody! Moving in time to it, not daring to talk for fear

*Man always tends to adjust himself to a tempo. Witness the jitterbugs of today. Wild dance music literally forces them to move in time to it. A work-melody, like the age-old Volga Boat Song, throws the listener into a slow, steady cadence. His heart, his breathing, literally slow down to the rhythm. A military march speeds up the heart, makes the listener want to fall into step. Even deaf people can feel the beat of a march.—Author.

our voices will create a discord! Not wanting to leave, afraid the sound of the rockets will throw us off tempo!" He caressed his jaw, scowling. "You . . ."

A wave of telepathic commands, stern, inexorable, drove them to silence. At the door of the cell stood one of the tall, grey-furred Saturnians. Beside him stood Janice Kent.

Helpless, held rigid by the Saturnian guard's telepathic control, the two men stared at her. The guard drew a small tube from his belt, directed it at the lock. A beam of purplish light struck some sensitive selenium plate and the door swung open. Janice Kent stepped forward, grasped Chance's wrist.

"I have come to see that you are comfortable," her fingers tapped out. "These first few days are the hardest. After that you begin to fall into the tempo. I shall stay in this city . . . they have given me quarters on the lower levels of this building . . . until you and your men have ceased to be discords. Then we will teach you telepathic control, the true meaning of the life-tempo. Submit to the melody and your captivity will be brief. Fight it, and a longer period of confinement will be necessary. I will see you soon again." She dropped Chance's wrist, moved off, walking in jerky rhythm, like some small marionette. The Saturnian, keeping them motionless by telepathic control, placed a large bowl of fruit on the floor. Not until the cell door had been locked once more did he release them from his will.

"And that," Holden muttered, "was glamour girl number one of the solar system! A robot controlled by music! Talk about your totalitarian states! This beats them hollow! Everyone working, moving, living in time to music! That cursed hammering music!" He whirled about, his face livid. "It's getting me, too! Getting me! Every move I make, I find myself doing it in cadence! Walking in time to it, talking, even breathing! We're being forced into a groove, made slaves like Janice! We've got to do something! Do something!"

"Easy, Holden!" Chance gripped his arm. "Remember, they said it would take a couple of weeks, and we've only been here a day and a half! We're still . . . discords! Able to think and act as we want, to fight the power that's making robots of us!" He picked up the bowl of fruit the Saturnian had left them. The container was of thin, beaten silver. "Funny he should have frozen us with his telepathic impulses before bringing in the food."

"Why not?" Holden grunted. "To keep us from jumping him."

"As if the two of us could handle that giant! No, it's something more . . . Holden! It's . . . noise! Remember how they winced when we talked? Noise throws them off their tempo! You know how a sour note in a symphony grates on your nerves? Well, that's what noise does to them! Only a hundred times worse! The Saturnians can't stand a break in their eternal rhythm!"

"So what?" Holden said stiffly. "We can't make any noise when they hold us motionless."

"We can't, no." A tight grin came over Chance's lean face. "But they can! Mr. Holden, you may get back to your stock manipulations yet!"

CHAPTER IV

Escape by Sound

THE cell was quiet the following evening . . . quiet, except for the rolling celestial melody that surged with rhythmic beat, inexorable, insistent. Like some giant flail, beating him,

Chance thought. He glanced at Holden, lying listlessly upon his bunk; the financier's fingers were drumming unconsciously in time to the music, his face was pale. The incessant rhythm had knocked the spirit of resistance out of him. He seemed already on the verge of surrendering to the relentless tempo.

Chance listened attentively to the roaring melody. Those sharp piercing notes . . . he had heard them just before the guard appeared yesterday with their food. And if, as he suspected, the Saturnian day was regulated by certain notes in the ever-repeated chorus, their guard would be due at any moment. Chance crossed the cell, shook Holden violently.

"No! Stop it!" The financier muttered. "Disturbing tempo . . ."

"That's what I aim to do! Get up!" He dragged Holden erect. "We're going to try and get out of here! Now! Talk . . . sing . . . recite the multiplication tables . . . anything to break that damned rhythm! And be ready to act!"

Holden stared stupidly about the room. Chance had pried one of the hobnails from his boots, hammered it into the wall. A strip of cloth torn from his shirt hung from the nail, while attached to the strip was the thin silver bowl in which their food had been placed.

"Huh!" Holden muttered. "If escape were as simple as that, they'd never have given us the bowl!"

"You forget these cells weren't made for our special benefit," Chance chuckled. "The Saturnians confined here in the past . . . political prisoners, I suppose . . . would never have dared use the means we're attempting since it would have been as bad for them as for their guards. But we haven't given way to the melody yet. We . . ." He went rigid as a surge of power gripped his mind.

Like statues the two earthmen stood, willed to immobility. The tall, furry Saturnian guard, food in hand, moved rhythmically toward the door. A purple flash from his electric key and the lock clicked open, the door swung back.

Things happened fast. The suspended silver bowl, struck by the iron door, gave off a loud gong-like crash, momentarily drowning out the monotonous celestial melody. With the sound the guard's face twisted, his body quivered as though under a blow. The terrible telepathic commands wavered, and Chance was able to take a step forward.

The guard had just regained his mental grip when the hanging bowl, swinging back, struck the door once more. His sense of rhythm distorted, the guard staggered back writhing as though in agony. Their wills released from domination, Chance and Holden plunged forward, bore their huge opponent to the floor. Under the rain of blows the big Saturnian went limp.

"Got him!" Chance panted. "Here!" He handed Holden the purple tube. "Free the others!"

HOLDEN raced along the corridor, focusing the ray of light upon the locks of the cells. Bewildered, the others of the *Astra's* crew stumbled into the passage.

"Sing!" Chance cut short their questions. "Make noise! Plenty of it!"

With blind obedience the gaunt, grim-faced spacehands burst into a ragged chorus of "The I. P. Patrol."

From the craters of cold Luna, to flaming Mercuree
You'll find the spaceways guarded by the ships of the I. P.
For we've tamed the little Marshies,

and we've mopped up on Io,
And we'll get you out of trouble, no matter where you go.
Ask the girls on any planet and they'll tell you that we . . .

Roaring the ribald verses in stentorian voices, the spacemen followed Chance along the corridor. At its end was another door, but the ray opened it. Singing, howling like madmen, the *Astra's* crew poured down a broad flight of stairs. At sight of them two huge Saturnian guards whirled about, their faces drawn in concentration. Before the deadly web of thoughts could enmesh the prisoners, however, the sound of their voices, raised in a crashing chorus, drowned out the eternal rhythm, filled the room with a wild cacophony of sound. The Saturnians winced, then took to their heels, stumbling awkwardly across the hall, into the street beyond.

"Sure, an' they don't appreciate music!" Grogan grinned. "And me the foinist tenor this side o' Venus! If 'tis only a counter melody as is needed to throw them off their sound track, we've no worries . . ."

"Can't tell what else they may have up their sleeves!" Chance muttered. "Wait here! I'm going to find Janice Kent!"

He plunged into one of the side corridors. The girl had said, he remembered, that she had been given a room in the lower levels of this building. He raced onward, peering into every room he passed. Twice he saw Saturnians, but lusty shouts, echoing along the passage, put them to flight.

A door at his right caught Chance's eye. He pushed it open, glanced inside. A slim, golden-haired figure leaped back in horror as he entered.

"Miss Kent!" Chance exclaimed. "Come on! We're going back to earth!"

The girl cringed at his words, then caught his wrist. Chance could feel her fingers pressing out a frantic message. "Can't leave! Your voices, the loss of rhythm . . . can't stand it! Please! Let me alone!"

Chance hesitated. Dimly he could hear the hoarse shouts of the earthmen, their rough song distorting the eternal cosmic melody. He grinned crookedly. A heroine who refused to be rescued! After all they had gone through to bring her back to earth . . .

"Sorry!" he said brusquely. "We're going home!"

As he stepped toward her, the girl began to pummel his chest, desperately, hysterically. Chance made a swift decision. He had never hit a woman before, but in a case like this . . .

The blow was clean, merciful. Janice Kent collapsed limply.

CHANCE threw her over his shoulder, raced back to join the others. They were where he had left them, in the hall of the building, singing lustily. Holden shot a glance at the captain, frowned.

"What's wrong with her?" he demanded. "If you've . . ."

"Don't talk. Sing." Chance pushed open the huge metal doors. "Let's go!"

The shouts, the chanting of the earthmen echoed loudly through the canyon-like streets. Groups of Saturnians, appearing from time to time on the street levels above them, fell writhing to the ground, crawled hastily away . . . their timing, their sound-controlled tempo killed by the voices of the earthmen. A discord in a celestial melody . . . a world, marching inexorably toward its destination, thrown out of step . . .

"This way!" Chance panted, motioning across the plain.

Forward the little group ran, through

the outskirts of the city, into the cold bitter twilight beyond the glowing arc. Weighed down by the dragging gravity, choked by the heavy, thick air, the earthmen raced on across a plain strewn by dark rocks, patches of moss and lichen, queer, grey-leaved shrubs. Behind the fugitives groups of the towering Saturnians hovered, moving in perfect rhythm, keeping ever out of earshot of the discordant shouting. And from every hand the monotonous cosmic harmony beat out its inexorable melody.

Chance, reeling under the weight of the girl, shot a quick glance about. A party of the Saturnians, still well out of hearing, were circling the group of earthmen in an effort to come between them and the *Astra*. Their tall, graceful forms, silvery fur shining in the wan radiance of the distant sun, were like those of pale phantoms. Others were advancing from time to time toward the fugitives, forcing the latter to shout to drive them back. Apparently they considered the sound-waves as weapons which must in time wear out. Nor were they wrong. Already the crew of the *Astra* were out of breath, so hoarse from continual shouting that they could barely croak. Chance groaned. From time to time, as the Saturnians moved rhythmically nearer, he could feel the surge of mental force plucking like insistent fingers at his brain. Again the men tried to sing, to break the terrible tempo, but their cracked voices were feeble, faint.

Holden, running at Chance's side, pointed. Looming through the swirling grey mists was a long, sleek shape. The *Astra!* Her airlocks open, just as she had been left by the earthmen. What had kept the Saturnians from taking her over, Chance wondered? Bent beneath the weight of the inert girl, he waved the others forward.

"Ship," he whispered hoarsely. "Hurry! Before . . . Saturnians . . ."

The others nodded, plunged on. Behind them their pursuers also had sighted the ship, realized what must result if the earthmen should unleash the stuttering roar of the rockets. Their strange, quasi-human faces drawn with fear, they swept forward. Again the earthmen tried to shout, to drown out the endless life tempo, but only a croak came from their raw throats.

Chance shook a weary head. Encouraged by their feeble cries, the Saturnians came nearer. Again the telepathic commands, numbing their brains. All at once two of the lagging earthmen froze to immobility, toppled to the ground. The surge of will-power grew . . . Grogan, Holden, fell.

BLINDLY, Chance staggered on, still carrying the girl. The *Astra* was only a few paces ahead. A stream of telepathic impulses gripped him. The rest of the earthmen had fallen, victims of the Saturnian wills . . . wills developed through centuries of unspoken communication. One step Chance took, a second, fighting with all the energy at his command. Six feet of moss-padded earth between him and the ship . . . if only he could . . .

Suddenly Chance's brain succumbed to the terrific thought power. He slumped heavily to the ground. The others, he could see, had fallen under the mental assault, lay like toppled tenpins upon the bleak soil. And the Saturnians were rushing forward to secure their prey . . .

Lying there, Chance's mind was a tangle of despairing thoughts. So close to escape and now . . . this! To be imprisoned again, guarded more closely until the inexorable cosmic melody had made them slaves! And Janice Kent

(*Concluded on page* 126)

There was a blur of moving bodies as the cobra struck and Montrex dodged

DR. VARSAG'S EXPERIMENT

BY CRAIG ELLIS

A striking cobra was slow motion in comparison to the speed of Dexter Montrex.

TODAY I went to the funeral of Dr. Arnold Varsag and Dexter Montrex. I watched their simple black coffins lowered into the grave and shovelfuls of earth thrown down over them. I stood there until the boxes had been completely buried, then I turned away. Yes, Dexter Montrex and Dr. Arnold Varsag are dead, and how they died makes one of the strangest stories I have ever heard.

It all started one evening when I was sitting alone in my study reading the proofs of my new book. The telephone rang and I went to answer it. It was Dr. Varsag speaking with a voice of unusual tenseness. "I want you to come over right away, Bert," he said. "It's extremely important."

I knew Varsag was excited about something, but he was usually in that state. But my proofs had to be in to the publisher within a week, and I told him so.

"Curse those proofs!" Varsag exclaimed. "This is something that will make all your inane books out of date!" His voice rose to a high pitch.

I was still reluctant to leave my work. "What's this all about?" I insisted. "You can't forever expect me to leave my work and come traipsing over to your place every time you get another one of your crazy notions."

Varsag's voice was a whisper. "All I can tell you is that it's about the Mongoose," he said. "You've got to come right over." And then he had hung up.

After that, and probably according to Varsag's expectations, it was impossible for me to continue with my own work. For weeks Varsag and Montrex had been talking about the Mongoose and all I had gleaned from their whispered conversation was that another one of Varsag's amazing experiments was under way. And this one it seemed concerned a human life—and a Mongoose. Only one thing more I knew, and that at least partially explained the reason for secrecy. The Mongoose was an extremely dangerous animal in spite of its size, and it was illegal to import them or keep them anywhere in the country because they were so destructive to bird-life. I knew that Varsag had received his specimen illegally.

I dressed hurriedly and drove over to Varsag's laboratory. His work rooms were cleverly located in a section of the city that was devoted to chemists' and physicans' laboratories, so that any late work he would be doing would not arouse any comment.

When I rang the bell the doctor himself answered it, almost immediately. His little intelligent black eyes were snapping with excitement. "I see you've got here, Bert," he said evidently pleased. "Follow me, quietly."

He led me quickly into his lab and closed the door. The room was high-ceilinged and very well lit. As always, it was filled with polished apparatus and tall and short and odd-shaped shining bottles full of queer liquids and potions, and as always, I had not the slightest idea as to what any of this equipment meant. The whole scene was so familiar and orderly that I forgot my mistrust.

Just then I saw the apparatus table in the center of the room, and on it a recumbent form covered by a white sheet—

Suddenly I heard a vicious animal snarl and a short burst of high-pitched humming come from a corner of the room. As I recoiled with surprise Varsag laughed indulgently, his black eyes watching me intently. "No cause for alarm," he said. "I'll show you the harmless little animal."

HE led me to a corner of the room that had been curtained off and drew away the heavy cover from an ordinary case such as he used for experimental animals. There was nothing inside that case but a little black and while guinea pig.

But what a guinea pig! Instead of the placid fat ball which never does anything but eat and sleep, the creature was fast and tricky as a fox. The animal was standing close to the front of the cage near the netting. Varsag slapped at it with a stick. Before the stick had reached halfway, the little thing was across the cage, crouched near the back, gazing at us out of its penetrating, shoe-button eyes. It was humming that high-pitched note which had first startled me.

I looked to Varsag, but he had turned away toward a small, slanting table whose face was a maze of dials. On the largest dial a long red hand was revolving swiftly. Varsag was evidently studying it, and now he turned and faced me. "I think it's time."

"Time for what? What the hell's going on here?"

Varsag smiled briefly. "You'll find out in just about a minute," he said. "Sit down here while I get my instruments together."

He went to a sterilizer and began to remove surgical instruments from it. Then he looked at me, and was smiling again. "You'd like to ask me about it, wouldn't you?" he said.

"Damned right I would. Who or what is that lying on that table under the white sheet?"

The doctor exclaimed as one of the heated instruments slipped from the towel and burned his finger. Without looking up, he said quietly, "The object of your curiosity is our old and mutual friend, Dexter Montrex."

For a minute I was too stunned to speak. I simply sat there with my hands clenched and my mouth tightly shut, determined not to make any outbreak. And then by the time I had recovered sufficient composure to say something, it was unnecessary.

I sat there watching Varsag prepare for something. . . .

Perhaps if you knew something of our past lives and relationships, it would be easier to understand what I felt.

We three, Montrex, Varsag and I, had gone to college together, in one of those ivy-covered New England campuses. Our friendship had come about naturally, for in those early days we had all been students in the scientific departments; neurology, bio and zoölogy. In time we became inseparable, and when we were graduated, we went out together to lick the world.

I did all right. Got myself a fair job in a research lab, then went out on

my own as a consultant and kept going. The book I had on the presses right then was my third, and the others were almost standard texts.

Arnold Varsag had done a good deal better. He was much the most brilliant of our group, and even in his early days he had blazed with the fire of fanaticism, a restless, never-satisfied thirst for experimentation. He had gone on to medicine, specialized in several fields, and became an extremely good surgeon; even then he went on, deeper always into science. He might have been one of the great scientists of this day, if his passion for work had not taken forms too strange for most men. Recently he had passed up a chance to make a barrel of money because he was deep in some cockeyed experiments on the neural systems of small mammals.

Montrex followed the most bizarre career of all, for a scientist. After one or two bad breaks, and because he wanted to keep eating, he became a heavyweight prizefighter. Possibly to some extent this was conditioned by his love of physical activity and direct combat, which he had shown in college football days. He was a magnificently formed man. Life rushed through that fellow.

AND now he was lying under a white sheet, while Varsag wheeled over a high table with his tools on it. Then he came over to me and sat down. "You're upset, Bert," he said, simply.

"That shouldn't be so hard to understand," I answered. "You call me away from work by mentioning that damned Mongoose that I know is around here somewhere—and then you tell me this. Why is Dexter lying there? What are you up to, Arnold?"

"Hold on now," said Varsag calmly. "There's nothing to be excited about. There isn't much time, but I think I can tell you something about this."

"It's very decent of you," I said.

"Save your sarcasm, Bert." There was a trace of bitterness and impatience in Varsag's voice as he continued. "Some moments ago I showed you a guinea pig. I think it must have looked a little odd to you. I am sure you must have some idea of what I've done to that guinea pig."

"Only a vague one. I think you've worked out some insane scheme of cross-breeding between little animals and your infernal Mongoose."

"Cross-breeding?" There was real amusement in Varsag's laughter. "Hardly that. I made it."

"You . . . made it?"

"Exactly. I made that guinea pig so fast by giving him the eyes and nervous system of a Mongoose! Here—"

He rose abruptly from his chair and crossed the room. He slid open the door of one of the compartments under a laboratory table.

There were several small cages inside, and as the door slid open, the blended humming of several animals' voices filled the room. I followed Varsag and looked down. There were three Mongooses in the cages. Nasty looking little things they were, even for a man who had had cause to become familiar with all kinds of strange rodents. They couldn't have been more than sixteen or eighteen inches long, with thin bodies which were made to look larger because their hair was standing on end. Now they were motionless, their beady little eyes taking everything in, watching us with a curious awareness.

I felt Varsag's hand on my arm and for the moment it was as if I had been in a trance. "If we can do all that for a guinea pig," Varsag said. "Think what we could do for a human being."

"Arnold!" I began—

He was walking toward the apparatus table. I followed him and grabbed him by the arm. With his free arm, Varsag reached out and pulled the white sheet away from Dexter Montrex's face. I saw Montrex lying there on the table, breathing slowly and peacefully, but imperceptibly.

"Look at him," said Varsag. "What a magnificent specimen! He sleeps beautifully anywhere."

"What are you saying?" I said fiercely.

Varsag looked at me for a moment before he said a word. "You and I have known Dexter a long time, haven't we, Bert?" he said. "We stood by helplessly while he fought to make a place for himself in a highly competitive world, and as much as he tried, we haven't helped him much." Varsag walked away as he continued speaking. He stood by one of the large windows and looked down into the dark street below. "Have you ever watched the way he holds his head shoulders when he walks? He has what one calls a regal air about him. Or what other people call the—look of an animal. That hasn't helped him much either."

I KNEW what Varsag meant. In spite of every physical endowment, Dexter Montrex hadn't done especially well as a prize fighter. You had to be more of a killer than he was to get by with plug-uglies. He had taken several bad beatings after doing well in his early years in the ring. His beautiful physique might have been pounded into a derelict shell after kicking around the fight clubs. All of us knew what lay at the end of that kind of road.

"What are you leading up to?"

"Imagine a creature so fast that it could dodge a snake—a snake as swift as a Cobra, which strikes so swiftly that it is only a blur to the human eye!" Varsag was standing there, almost talking to himself now carried away by his own words. "Think what a nervous system such a being would have, think what marvelous speed of sight, what control and precision of muscular movement, what lightning reflexes!"

He turned and looked at me. "There is such an animal—the Mongoose. For some purposes, of all the living things on earth, the Mongoose has the best developed of all possible nervous systems. A human being with that equipment would be invincible in personal combat. You couldn't possibly put a finger on him. He could strike a dozen blows before you realized he had started to move."*

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*I might enlarge a bit here on what Vargas meant. In the course of subsequent days, I learned a great deal from him.

The reason that the movement of a snake, or a similarly rapid motion, is seen only as a blur by the human eye, is due to the phenomenon known as retention of vision. This means that the retina of the eye preserves the image upon it for a fraction of a second. So that when we look at a moving picture, for example, we do not see individual frames of film succeeding each other, but only a continuous movement. A movement like the snake's is too fast for our slow retina to record. The retina of the Mongoose must have less retentiveness of vision than does that of the human being, since it obviously perceives the snake's motion clearly enough to dodge it. This is also partly due to the quick focusing powers of the lens in its eye, which must change focus instantaneously if it is to perceive the snake's darting motion. (There is another possibility: the Mongoose retina may have sufficient depth of focus to make unnecessary any change of focal length.)

Another important characteristic the Mongoose possesses is a lightning quick reaction time. Once decided, consciously or unconsciously, upon an action, there is no appreciable interval between the decision and its execution. In humans this reaction time is comparatively snail-paced, often taking as long as three-quarters of a second where rapid action is necessary.

The third necessary characteristic is muscular coordination, since the Mongoose must be able to change direction almost immediately, and control action with a precision to gradations involving a fraction of an inch. Indeed, a fraction of an inch is an extremely large margin, when we are concerned with the striking of a snake like the cobra, the Mongoose's traditional enemy.—Author.

I was shouting before Varsag had finished speaking. "You're not going to experiment on Montrex!"

Very quietly Varsag answered me. "You saw what I did with the guinea pig? This isn't an experiment any longer. I know what I can do, and I've shown it to Dexter. We've both made our minds up."

I stood there for a minute helpless with confusion and rage, and for a half a moment I was almost tempted into violence. Standing there, watching him carefully, Varsag must have known what was going on in my mind. He smiled faintly.

"I hardly think so, Bert," he said. "Not two such old friends as we. Not when Dexter himself, as well as I, think that this is the best thing to do." He held out a hand shortly, knowing I would take it, and I did. "I am almost sorry I told you about this," he went on. "I anticipated your reactions weeks ago, that's why I kept quiet. Then, when I remembered the early direction of your work, and realizing that I would need help, I thought we could take the chance. I hope you won't make me sorry."

And so, the battle that had loomed suddenly and irresistibly in my mind, was quite as suddenly over. There were times when it was impossible to fight Varsag. I nodded slowly in agreement. . . .

I will not describe for you the details of that operation, for the same reason that I destroyed all notes on observations and experiments, and destroyed with my own hands Varsag's experimental animals. In spite of everything that happened, at least I knew from the beginning that Arnold Varsag was an extremely competent man, and more than that—he was honest. If his studies and notes had ever gotten into other hands . . .

I watched and helped as well as I could that night, half fearful, half fascinated, while Varsag grafted sections of Mongoose eye on Montrex's eyes, and made some extremely minute changes in the optic nerve. During this time he worked from a series of every detailed models he had constructed from dissections of Mongooses. I might add that there was some variation made in the dendrites around the nerve center of the brain. Nothing, however, could induce me to go into the matter any further.

MONTREX was convalescent for almost ten days. During that time Varsag fed him on food mixed with a brown paste. He would not tell even me what this paste consisted of, but gave me to believe it was manufactured —unbelievable as it sounds—from some of the vital organs of the Mongoose.

Such was the splendid body of our patient that he was on his feet in less than half the time it would have taken an ordinary man after the terrific beating he took on that operating table. It is a wonder to me that he survived at all.

During this period of ten days Varsag checked over his notes again and again to be sure he had made no mistake. He made careful and detailed notes on all his observations of the patient's condition. As for me, the nervous strain of that period was almost beyond endurance. The proofs of my book lay where I had left them that night Varsag had called, and I ignored a dozen cajoling and threatening letters from my publisher.

An then Montrex was on his feet again. The operation, it appeared, was a success. Our first impressions were that a glorious man had been created, faster and more potent than any man that had ever lived. At first I never

doubted a striking contribution to humanity had been made, except when I sometimes would accidentally see one of the Varsag Mongooses slinking around in a cage, looking at everything with that horribly penetrating, furtive look. Then I shook as if with a strange fever that might have come from the Asiatic home of the damned creatures.

I will never forget the first display of Montrex's new power. It was his first day out of doors. Varsag and I were walking with him through a nearby park. We passed a little boy playing with a large brown dog. For some reason the animal suddenly growled deep in its throat and a slightly mad look came into its eyes. It flung itself at Montrex's legs! Montrex moved easily aside and the dog's rush carried it past him. It turned and came at him again, jaws slavering. Again Montrex dodged without effort.

While Varsag and I stood by, watching the queer scene intently, a burly policeman rushed up, his gun half out of its holster. "Whose dog is that?" he shouted. "It's gone mad!"

"Rubbish!" said Varsag.

The officer spun around. "Who the hell are you?"

Varsag looked coolly at the speechless officer and turned to Montrex and me. "The dog will be all right. Let's be on our way."

Someone grabbed the animal and we walked quickly off. As soon as Montrex had walked out of its range the animal quieted and stopped struggling with its captor, though continuing its hoarse growl. Montrex laughed loudly. It was one of the few times he laughed after the operation.

"We must be careful of such minor accidents," said Varsag, "or we'll be creating a sensation everywhere we go."

He solved the problem neatly, I must say. After that, whenever a dog grew angry in Montrex's presence, and they did every time he passed, Varsag would throw a small bit of meat he carried about with him. Instead of rushing Montrex, the dog would stand guarding the meat until we were out of range. In this way we avoided further difficulty.

In a few weeks, Montrex's dodging powers increased tremendously. We used to make quite a game out of trying them. He would walk unharmed through the wildest automobile traffic, scaring motorists out of their wits, crossing through the streams of whizzing cars while the drivers looked at him foolishly.

AS his health returned completely, we decided it was time for him to resume prizefighting. There was some difficulty getting him a match, but we finally contracted for him to meet a fighter named Walloping Wharton in a small local club. Wharton was good. He had knocked out many of the big names in the ring, but he was old and could be worn down after taking a few rounds of punishment; his legs would begin to fail as the fight progressed. The usual method of fighting him was to stay away from him for as long as possible and try to get him after he had tired. Wharton was clever and a deadly puncher when fresh.

By the time the night of the fight came, I didn't know whether Varsag or I was the more excited: certainly Montrex was exceedingly calm. We watched him carefully. He seemed very quiet except for his eyes, which, though they seemed to have grown smaller, looked everywhere. When the time came to enter the ring, he suddenly adopted a curious shuffling gait, and his shoulders became slightly hunched, with his head bent forward. It was a startling change

from his former free stride and high-held head.

The bell rang and Montrex just walked out to meet Wharton with his hands at his sides. Wharton, obviously perplexed, threw a raking, though hesitant, left jab squarely at Montrex. Montrex moved his head slightly and the blow went harmlessly past his head. Wharton led again with his left, this time more quickly. Again Montrex dodged.

The crowd became restless, sensing a strange situation. Suddenly Wharton started to close in on Montrex with a furious barrage of fast right and left hand blows.

Montrex did not move backwards. He merely stood still, moving his head and body slightly, almost twitching, just enough to miss the blows, until Wharton had come in too close to do anything but clinch. Not once did Montrex's hands come up from his sides.

Wharton's face twisted into a curious expression of savagery and bewilderment. He had never before struck so surely and with less effect. And still Montrex stood completely passive. We in his corner could see the rapid darting of his eyes. Wharton came toward Montrex again, his arms well up in a close guarding position. The crowd roared for him to knock out this strange creature who could not be touched, and yet would not hit back.

But all his efforts to land a blow on Montrex's strong body were futile. The weird spectacle lasted almost to the end of the round. Not once had Montrex raised a hand in his own defense. Not once did Wharton manage to touch Montrex with a blow. With about fifteen seconds to go, I noticed Montrex's cheek twitch slightly. He stepped in quickly and Wharton went down. He was out cold.

Yet all that Montrex had done—seemingly—was to slip forward, flash down, and send a hand forward with a single light punch. *One,* no more.

"Fake!" The massed cry roared through the hall, furiously. Momentarily we expected violence. But Montrex seemed composed even as he was roundly jeered, climbing through the ropes and walking back to the dressing room. His face was still completely expressionless, but his eyes were in every corner of that hall.

The next morning the fight drew comment in the papers only to be condemned as a "tank show." Only one sports writer commented briefly on Montrex's amazing exhibition of his ability to avoid punishment. The consensus, what there was of it, was that the whole thing had been framed.

WE bided our time. Only the manager of the local fight club, who had booked our first fight, was certain there had been no fraud. He called at Varsag's home while I was there two days later. He sat uneasily on the edge of a chair, his eyes traveling about the room, as if he were afraid of something happening.

It didn't take long to understand what was troubling him. He had had a long talk with Walloping Wharton, it seems, and what he had heard . . . "Well," as he put it, "the long and short of it, Doc, is that I'd like yer fighter to show his stuff at my club again."

There was something curious, something roundabout and underhanded, in the way he proposed the whole deal. Evidently he had some plan in mind, and was hoping we wouldn't see through it. I wagged my head for Varsag to leave the room with me, and we stepped into the adjoining library.

"You know what he's up to, don't you, Arnold?" I said.

"I think so. I think it's rather a good thing."

"Fine. My reaction, exactly. I hope we're correct."

We were correct. When our fight came up, I looked carefully all about the house, and in a corner of the balcony, I saw the evidence. Montrex was fighting another has-been named Sailor Darrel, but looking around at the names in the sporting world who had managed to find their way to this little club, I knew that the word had gone out. It hadn't taken as long as we'd thought.

I sat tensely the first few rounds. The fight was almost a replica of the first one. Montrex came in with his hands loosely at his sides and weaved easily away from everything Sailor Darrel threw at him. In the fourth around Darrel began to look frightened. It was evident he had been warned of what to expect, but even the warning had not prepared him for anything like this. After throwing a series of punches, he would back away and look to his seconds in their corner, not knowing what to do.

It was just about then that Montrex came in slowly, ducked for an instant and flicked his right hand out.

The Sailor went down as if he had been hit by a steam hammer. The fight was over. A lone voice cried out, angrily, "Phony!" but no one took up the cry. More than one pair of eyes looked up at that balcony, and when Montrex left the arena, he walked up an aisle that was strangely silent.

It broke the next morning.

There had been a slow-motion moving-picture camera secreted in the balcony—and they had photographed the whole fight! Now they knew. Where they had seen one light punch strike Sailor Darrel, *the camera showed the delivery of nine lightning thrusts*—and behind those blows was the perfect timing and muscular coordination of the fastest animal on earth!

The story was a newspaper sensation. It was ballyhooed all over the United States and every foreign country. Offers for bouts poured in by the dozens. Some bright sports writer christened Montrex "The Human Cobra," and the "The Human Cobra" he remained to the American public. Varsag and Montrex and I chuckled at that. We could still laugh about it then, about the ironical way that Montrex's speed, taken from the Mongoose, the deadly enemy of the Cobra, had given him that name. We did not dare to reveal, however, how it was that Montrex acquired his speed. After all, it was against every law of society and nature.

Then something happened that stopped Varsag and me cold for a time. In Montrex's third fight, he revealed two new habits. As he moved around his helpless opponent, he began to hum in a peculiar high pitch—and his hair bristled and stood on end. The habits of the mongoose in battle!

We cropped Montrex's hair close so its bristling would not be noticed. The sports writers did notice the new habit of humming, but they put it down to the fighter's efforts to maintain body rhythm, and some of them actually compared the habit to one exhibited by Jack Dempsey, who apparently used to hum as he moved about the ring.

The habits did not give us much trouble, but the development they were a sign of did. In six weeks Montrex had defeated seven fighters including Young Michael, Terry Burns, Foxy Gottlieb, Cannonball Martin Pollock, and some of the toughest opponents in the ring. Varsag and I lived in an increasing state of fear, apprehensive lest someone discover our secret, and more and more concerned with the strange

developments of Montrex's habits. He was turning into a morose and sly brute. He had almost killed the last three men he had fought, paralyzing them with the incredible swiftness and mounting savagery of his attacks.

IT was with a sharp shock that I realized he was beginning to be bored with fighting in the prize ring!

Neither Varsag nor I realized the transformation in him until the night we signed the contracts for the fight with Big Bo Porter, the giant Negro champion. For the past week or more, we had become concerned with evidences of a strange fatigue that came over Montrex at night. He couldn't rise as early in the morning as he had, and he was often tired for half a day. On this night, Varsag and I and "The Human Cobra" were preparing for sleep and Montrex had just been showing us how he had learned a new way to shave himself. Using a razor blade somewhat smaller than the usual size, microscopically sharp, and a magnifying mirror which enlarged his face many times, he cut off each whisker individually, moving his hand so quickly that it could not be followed, and still finishing his shave in half the time it took an average man shaving the regular way.

But when he put down the razor he seemed unusually morose and nervous. The recently ever-present twitch returned in his cheek. I attempted to lighten the tension by jocularity. "Well, Dexter," I said, "if everything else fails you can always be a barber."

Montrex was not listening. He put down his razor and his face dropped its lively expression, resuming that quiet, yet furiously nervous look. He began to pace about the room, turning quickly, shoulders slightly hunched. I realized forcibly that Montrex was looking and acting more like an animal every day. That quiet expression, with its nervous searching glance, was like that of an animal in a cage! Montrex was getting restless. I feared we could no longer hold him in check. I looked at Varsag and caught his glance. Was Montrex's fatigue a psychological one?

Later, I spoke to Varsag and resolved to stay awake that night and stand a sort of guard.

How futile a gesture! I could not have kept Montrex in that room unless I chained him. At about two in the morning I began to doze slightly.

A slight click roused me instantly, in time to see Montrex, fully dressed, going out the door! He had gotten out of bed and dressed without making the slightest sound. Only the clicking of the doorlatch had given him away.

I ran to follow and realized I was not dressed. Quickly I shook Varsag awake and we pulled on some clothes. By the time we were ready to pick up his trail, it was impossible to trace him. We returned to the apartment.

Back in the room I turned suddenly to Varsag and said, "Montrex is becoming an animal." My voice was challenging. Varsag nodded. His face looked misshapen. His eyes were hard and black as coal.

"Our glorious man," he said bitterly. "Our gift to himself and to humanity!"

It relieved me a little to see that Varsag realized the menace of Montrex in his present form. "We must find a way to change him back," I said.

"Change him back!" Varsag almost leaped at me. A fanatical fire burned from his eyes. "Destroy the experiment?"

I looked directly at him. He saw my resolution and for once, he was on the defensive. "What good would changing him back do?" he said. "This may be only a temporary development. Dex-

ter would never submit to another operation now. I'm not sure it can be performed. Bert, you're not being reasonable."

"We must change him back," I said. "Dexter is our friend."

"If he is our friend, why destroy him?" Varsag cried. "I am the only man in the world who could have made this operation and I am the only man in the world who can undo it!" He held himself erect, the lamp making grotesque light and shade patterns of his features, and his eyes shone. "I'll see this experiment through or die," he said. "And you'll see it through or Dexter dies! I swear it!"

I knew he meant it. There was nothing I could do but hope—hope that events would convince Varsag I was right. I had to stay. These men, the strange human-being-animal and the doctor who had made him, were my two best friends.

Montrex came in about dawn. He came in noiselessly. Apparently he had already learned how to open the door without clicking the latch. Varsag and I pretended to be asleep, but we watched him covertly. Fatigue lay heavily on him. His eyes were half-closed, his graceful body sagged. Sleep came quickly to him.

THE next evening we were ready to follow Montrex when he got up and left. Shortly past midnight he slipped out again.

We followed him in Varsag's car at a distance of about two hundred yards. At that distance the sensitivity of his vision did not seem to be so effective. He walked rapidly for about ten blocks, until he came to the great Bronx Zoological Gardens, and walked without hesitation toward the zoo—and then he disappeared into what appeared to be the reptile house!

"Arnold!" I said, fiercely, "do you know where he's going?"

Varsag nodded grimly. We got out of the car and followed Montrex. We did not know then how he had effected an entrance through the iron fence that surrounded the snakehouse. I learned later he had stolen a key from the guard during the day. Such an act would be extraordinarily simple for a man of his speed and precision of movement.

There was an almost full moon that evening. It shone through the huge plate windows of the snakehouse and illumined the scene slightly.

As we looked on, Montrex appeared, *and entered the cage of a solitary cobra,* a huge creature of the breed named *Sadu.* He had stripped to the waist and thrown his clothes carelessly on the limbs of a felled tree lying in the glass house.

The reptile was awake. As Montrex came into the cage it lifted its head, with the great hood spreading out behind it. The moonlight gleamed on scaly sides as the snake coiled swiftly. In the quiet we could hear Montrex's peculiar high-pitched humming as he moved quickly back and forth in front of the swaying head of the reptile. He was only a foot away from its head—

There was a blur as the cobra struck! Montrex must have eluded the lancing movement, for he resumed his weaving before the snake's head. The whole movement and recoil had been too swift for us to follow. The flat head whipped forward again, and again Montrex danced aside precisely the right distance.

Sadu struck again and again. Each time Montrex was untouched, coming back to the duel with his expression unchanged. It was impossible to follow the action. All we knew was that when the snake returned to position after striking, there was Montrex, elusive,

imperturbable, tantalizing.

A cloud passed from the moon and we got a glimpse of Montrex's face. It was flatly immobile, but we knew that under the shadow of the brows the beady mongoose eyes were completely alive. His tongue lolled slightly out of his half-open mouth.

The bizarre combat continued. Although it took place without a sound save for Montrex's humming and a slithering noise from the coils of the snake, the whole zoo somehow sensed a fight was in progress, and mysteriously, the howls of the giant cats and chattering of the monkeys began to be heard. A vast rustling filled the snake house as every reptile in it came alive. It seemed as if the life of an entire jungle were ringed about the combatants in the tiny cell.

The battle in the patch of moonlight was nearing its end. The giant *Sadu* seemed to be tiring. It's hood dropped slightly and it relaxed its coil for a moment. The moment was enough. When we could make out the action again the snake was away in a corner where Montrex seemed to have kicked it. It was still alive, though apparently exhausted.

I was suddenly aware of Varsag's hand tightly clutched around my arm, his fingers digging fiercely into my flesh.

Montrex left the cage quickly and disappeared. The noises of the animals in the zoo subsided almost instantly. Varsag and I found the car and sped home, in order to be in bed when Montrex returned.

For a time neither of us said anything. At length as we covered the few blocks to the apartment Varsag said, "You know, Bert, Dexter Montrex is still human."

"You can still say that after tonight?"

"If he were completely animal," Varsag said, in a voice that was utterly calm, "he would have killed and eaten that cobra."

"What little human is left in him," I said, "is quickly disappearing. In a month . . . we've got to stop—"

"Bert!" Varsag said sharply. "We've been over this before. Understand me, now. I'm seeing it through no matter what happens!"

AND so matters continued as the time of the fight approached. We spent most of our waking hours devising ways to keep Montrex away from the snake-house. Partly by tiring him as much as we could in the daytime so he would not prowl at night, partly by giving him a doped drink before he went to bed whenever we had the opportunity, we managed to avoid further visits to the zoo. On one occasion, however, nothing we did was of any avail, and we were forced to creep out into the night and once more watch Montrex go through his amazing contest with *Sadu*, the giant cobra. Again he tired it completely, but did not kill it, ending the fight by kicking it into a corner.

We trained Montrex strictly for this fight, although there was no more need of it than there was for any of the other battles. Even the power and strength of Big Bo Porter would be useless against Montrex. We only went through the routine so that he would be too tired at night to indulge his monstrous passion for those bouts with *Sadu*.

On the evening of the battle with Big Bo Porter it was of course impossible to dope Montrex or tire him out, since he had to fight a battle for the heavyweight championship of the world.

But as night drew on he became more and more restless. It was only by watching him continually and exercising almost main force that we could get

him into the stadium, dress him in his fighting trunks and put the protective bandages on his hands. And then he stopped speaking to us. He continued pacing about the dressing room.

Upstairs a noisy crowd waited for the fight it had paid from fifteen to fifty dollars to see, thousands of people who had made "The Human Cobra" a 10-1 favorite in the betting to win the heavyweight championship of the world. A great shouting warned that the last preliminary was over and that the championship fight was next on the program.

Varsag and I observed Montrex closely. His face was absolutely impassive.

A boy stuck his head in the door and called, "Ready!"

Varsag and I each moved to grasp one of Montrex's arms, but he evaded us easily and stepped out the door. We followed him down the aisle of the huge boxing arena. As Montrex appeared, the crowd cheered deafeningly. "Come on, Cobra!" someone screamed.

Montrex did not respond with any sign, but walked quickly up to the ring and stepped through the ropes. A muscle twitched violently in his cheek. He did not utter a word during the referee's instructions.

Big Bo Porter flexed his long, lithe arms, grinning nervously. His white teeth shone. He was a superb creature. I knew that probably he could outfight any human being in the world with his fists, but he should never have been in the same ring with Dexter Montrex. The men separated and went back to their corners. Montrex's eyes darted wildly about.

THE bell rang, and suddenly Montrex had leaped out from the corner and darted at Porter. With an overwhelming fury he lashed at the Negro, catching him squarely on the back of the neck. It looked as he had struck the champion three or four times. In reality he must have hit him twenty or thirty crushing blows at the base of the skull.

It was the back of the head attack of the Mongoose!

Porter slumped suddenly. When he hit the canvas, his head was twisted at a peculiar angle. I saw Montrex bare his teeth and look at the fallen man.

The crowd was strangely silent. The referee never began his count. He just stood there with a hand upraised, but that hand didn't come down. He could have counted to a million: Porter was dead.

In that vast and awesome silence, just as the first groan of the mob was beginning, a groan that would burst into the horrible cries of thousands, Montrex suddenly leaped from the ring. With fantastic speed he was down the aisle and out of the arena before anyone could have realized what he was doing, or raised a hand to stop him.

He had shouted only one word, just before he leaped from the ring. . . .

"Sadu!"

And in a moment, like some huge animal awakening, the crowd was surging to life. In the midst of that overwhelming noise and confusion, with thousands streaming down to the arena, and the whole place a choked, single mass of people, we fought our way through them to the door. We knew where Montrex had gone.

It took our taxi forty minutes through heavy traffic to get to the Zoological Gardens. Through the din in the streets, and the growing shrieks of sirens, I heard Varsag, sitting beside me, cursing and moaning. The man seemed to have lost control of himself, partly from a terrible rage, more from a great feeling of frustration. . . .

There was Montrex! Through the yellow gleam of one of the park lights, we saw him running ahead of us, straight toward the snakehouse.

"Dexter! Stop!" I shouted, sprinting vainly behind him. It was impossible to catch him. He left me far behind, and ran the rest of the distance to the snakehouse. With Varsag running grimly behind me, we kept going.

We just caught a glimpse of Montrex as he slipped through the gate, and in his hurry, he left it open. The bandages from his hands had been unwound, and they lay on the ground like white serpents.

We ran through the gate toward the snakehouse . . . and a high-pitched, frenzied humming came to us. Again the sound was picked up by a hundred confined animals. Then the faint crescent of the new moon broke through the clouds, and we saw Montrex standing inside the snakehouse, standing there in nothing but his short boxing trunks. A great screaming, full of wild cries, had filled the night air, yet over it all we heard him humming—watched him begin his weaving toward that great, coiled scaly body of the cobra, shining in the moonlight. Montrex, his short hair plainly on end, crouching, moving toward the glistening scales—

Suddenly the moon was shining on two scaly bodies!

Another cobra had been put into *Sadu's* cage! The two hoods ballooned. Frantically I shouted, "Dexter—there's another!" He didn't hear me. It was as if he were not of our world. The hood behind him danced, played an instant, then shot forward until its flat head had smashed into Montrex's back.

For a moment the moonlight was full on his face. His expression softened, and he spun around, accidentally facing us. A look of childish surprise came to his little eyes. Soft lines sprang up around his mouth. The humming had stopped, and now something like a sad smile flitted over his face, and it became completely placid. Then he sank down limply into the shadows. He never knew that the great cobras had hit more than once.

Then, before I could realize what was happening, Vargas, sobbing hysterically, had flung himself around the snakehouse and inside through the door, tearing at the heads that spit at the quiet body on the floor.

I heard him scream once, horribly. The hoods whipped about his body. . . .

TODAY I went to the funeral of Dr. Arnold Varsag and Dexter Montrex.

I have just destroyed all of our notes, and the remains of our experiment. It was a small, vicious satisfaction to kill the ratty animals, and I took it. What will happen to me now, I don't know.

I've told this story because I think it should be known. I cannot carry the whole secret within me, nor do I think it wise. I have asked the editors of this magazine to publish my story for me, because it seemed to me that within these pages, and here alone, might I find the audience for which I sought; people who might comprehend the meaning of an experiment, and not be too harsh when I tried to give a scientific justification.

For it is men like Arnold Varsag was, who make our world move. To the average person, it might have sounded fiendish. Only the men who understand such men as Varsag and, in his own way, Montrex, can sympathize with me.

Perhaps it is better that way.

THE END

SLAVES OF RHYTHM

(*Concluded from page* 111)

. . . youth, beauty, money . . . all lost in this barren world . . . High above, Chance could see the rings of satellites, yellow bands against the dark sky. A celestial music-box, grinding out its eternal cadence . . .

The Saturnians were advancing upon their prisoners, holding them motionless with their brain-force.

And at that instant it happened. A shrill, inhuman voice arose, screaming in strident, angry tones.

"Damn, damn, damn!" it cawed. "Full rockets ahead!" Following which it launched into a tirade of the most eloquent and abusive profanity.

"Tycho!" Chance gasped. "Good old Tycho!"

Again the parrot screamed its profane torrent of expletives. Tycho was hungry, and no telepathic commands could reach his sluggish brain.

"Damn, damn, damn!" he howled. "Dirty soot-hogs! Poor Tycho!"

The Saturnians fell back, wincing, and Chance felt his brain released from the terrible grip. He realized, now, what had kept the furry telepaths from entering the ship. With one leap Chance was at the *Astra*'s air-lock. Snatching up a stone, he began to pound it upon the metal hull. A booming, deafening clangor rewarded his efforts.

As Chance frenziedly hammered the rock upon the *Astra's* hull, the silver-furred men of Saturn broke, ran. Tuning thrown off by the terrible din, they staggered like drunken men, reeled awkwardly across the plain.

"Quick!" Chance exclaimed, beating a furious tocsin with the rock. "Get aboard! Start the motors idling!"

Grogan nodded, disappeared through the air-lock. Holden, the crew, their brains numbed by the telepathic battering, followed. A moment later the *Astra's* rockets began to roar at idling speed. Not until their roar drowned out the weird Saturnian rhythm did Chance throw down his chunk of stone, and, picking up the helpless girl, enter the ship.

"Close the locks!" he snapped. "We're leaving this mad-house at once! You" . . . he motioned to a couple of the spacehands . . . "take Miss Kent to my cabin! We'll have to keep her locked up until we're out of range of the magnetic influence of Saturn. Once we're free of this damned music, I think she'll come around." He paused, feeling Holden's gaze upon him. "If, of course . . ." Chance eyed the bruise on the owner's jaw . . . "Mr. Holden agrees."

"Agrees!" Grogan roared. "Devil take him, 'twas his blundering got us into this! Your orders are enough for us, Cap'n . . ."

"Quiet, Grogan!" Chance said stonily. "Aboard this yacht Mr. Holden is owner . . . in command! If he chooses to break me, put me in irons, you'll obey him! Discipline is the first law of space!" He turned once more to the financier. "Your orders, sir?"

For a long moment the two men's eyes met. Suddenly Holden's hand was extended.

"I've been a fool, Chance," he admitted. "If you came into my office at Mercis and tried to tell me how to run my business, I'd throw you out. Yet I've been trying to tell you how to run things in space. I've caused enough trouble at it is. And I apologize. From now on you're in command!"

Martin Chance's lean brown hand gripped Holden's soft, pale one.

"Right!" he said. Then, facing the group of spacehands. "Open those rockets to the limit! We're heading home!"

THE END

DEATH OVER CHICAGO!

The sidewalks of Chicago's "Loop" were crowded with men, women, and children . . . all looking up at the darkening, November sky! Through the gray clouds appeared a weird, incredible light, like a huge ship glowing with some eldrich illumination . . . nearer and nearer it came . . . until . . . ! Then—all hell broke loose! A panic-stricken metropolis was being invaded by an army of metal men . . . robbing . . . ravaging . . . killing! Who were they? Where did they come from? What did this all mean? Was science remaking the world? Relax in sheer breathlessness . . . read DEATH OVER CHICAGO.

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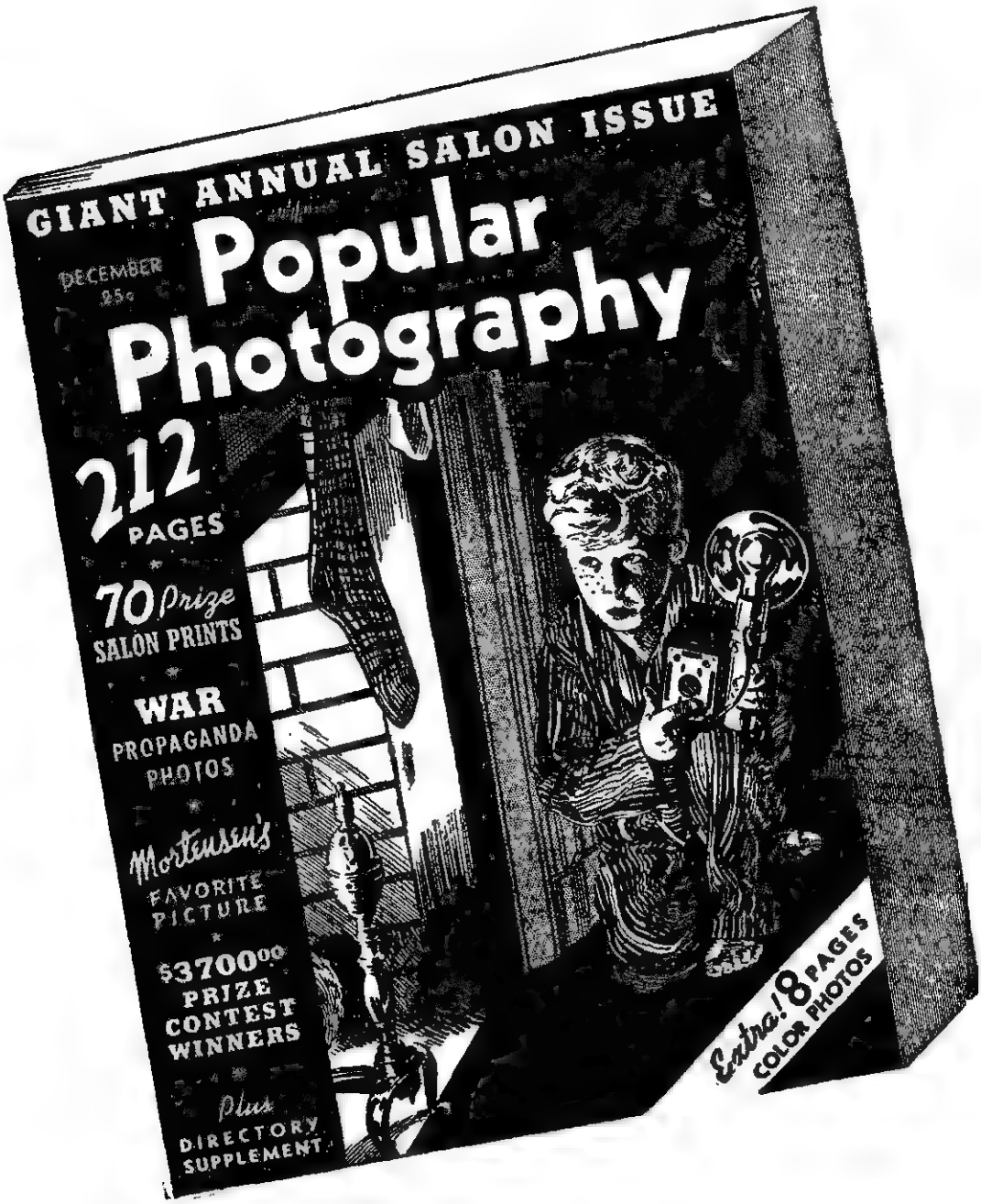

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MONTHLY MERIT AWARD

A reader asks: "What will you do about awarding prizes on serials?" Well, this issue is an example of our procedure in such cases. A serial will be ranked among the stories in each issue it appears, but it will not receive a prize until the final month of its appearance. Thus, Ralph Milne Farley's "Hidden Universe," which placed first in this month's voting, will not be considered until next month, when the voting on the last installment is finished. If a serial ranks first during its entire appearance, there can be no doubt of its value, and its right to a prize. If it ranks first at its initial appearance, then falls sadly, it certainly does not rank a prize. If it ranks high with each installment, it will be judged on averages of *all* issues in which it appears.

This month, therefore we award our $50.00 prize to Wm. F. Temple, for his "The 4-Sided Triangle," which ranked number 1 among the *complete* stories in the issue. Congratulations, Mr. Temple.

The lucky reader who wins our monthly $10.00 award for astuteness in selecting the stories in the nearest to the correct order, is Mr. Russell Gale, Box 222, Leedey, Oklahoma. You were identical in your selections, with one exception; you placed the 4th and 5th stories in reverse order. Congratulations. Try again.

"The 4-Sided Triangle," polled 918 votes out of a possible 1,296 (100%).

Title	*Votes*	*Rating*
1. The Hidden Universe	1053	.81
2. The 4-Sided Triangle	918	.71
3. Dictator of Peace	837	.65
4. Whirlpool in Space	675	.52
5. Missing: Millions in Radium	621	.49
6. Legion of the Dead	558	.43

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Amazing Stories,
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Chicago, Illinois.

In my opinion the stories in the January issue of AMAZING STORIES rank as follows:

	No. Here
SONS OF THE DELUGE	_____
ADAM LINK IN BUSINESS	_____
THE STRANGE DEATH OF RICHARD SEFTON	_____
THE MAN WHO SAW TWO WORLDS	_____
SLAVES OF RHYTHM	_____
DR. VARSAG'S EXPERIMENT	_____

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

Attached is my letter of 20 words or more, on my reason for selecting story number one for that position. ☐ Check here.

Meet the Authors

NELSON S. BOND Author of

SONS OF THE DELUGE

IT is always rather difficult to stand off, as at a distance, and view one's own life and activities—but I am told, by some "stander-offers" that viewed from such an angle I live an enviable life. The reason for this being that, like an epiphyte, I have not succeeded, in my thirty years of existence, in "striking roots" anywhere—but drift from place to place, seemingly obtaining sustenance from the air.

My wartime boyhood was spent in several cities; Washington, D. C., figuring most prominently. Later there was a period of schooling in Philadelphia, following which a desire to be a civil engineer led me to the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The depression killed the engineering urge, but sent me back to school—Marshall College in Huntington, W. Va. Graduation represented a trifold change in my way of living, as it coincided with my marriage to the loveliest and swellest girl on the campus. Fortunately the new Mrs. Bond shared my love of travel and approved my desire to become a writer.

I started writing publicity for everything from panty-waists to picnic groves. Scratch off two years of this as wasted time and energy. Then came six months in Nova Scotia (spent extolling the virtues of this glorious little province as a tourist resort) at the end of which I found, to my growing astonishment, that magazine editors were not only willing to use my publicity articles—but were paying me for them handsomely!

August Lenniger, one of authordom's finer agents, now entered the picture—taking young article-writing Bond in hand, and persuading him to turn fictioneer. There came a few months of fumbling, inept writing, and hard knocks—then we hit the jackpot. I started to click; stories in *Esquire, Scribner's,* inclusion in O'Brien's *Best Short Stories of 1938,* twenty-six weeks on the air with a radio program, "Mr. Mergenthwirker's Lobblies." And the number of stories sold leaped from an average of one per month to one per week.

Since the writer needs only his typewriter and elbow-room, the Bonds started traveling. Last year we lived in Augusta, Georgia. Right now, we have no home. We are locating in or around Roanoke, Virginia, for the summer season—after which we may wander out, seeking new worlds to conquer. We were lucky visitors at the sf convention at the New York World's Fair.

Thus the rough summary. As I have said sometime before in this column, I am tremendously gratified at the recent expansion of public interest in science-fiction, and at the brand new "style" of science-fiction writing which, within the past two years, has swept away the old, "I went to Mars and met a princess and did this-and-that" formula; supplanting it with human interest stories of credible creatures acting credibly.

I want to be with you readers often, and earnestly hope that I will win a place in your affections like that held now by such science-fiction "greats" as Merritt, Campbell, Weinbaum, and others. I do not seek to foist myself on you as their equal or their imitator; merely as another writer who loves this type of fiction and wants to do the best job he can.—*Nelson S. Bond.*

FREDERIC ARNOLD KUMMER, JR.

Author of

SLAVES OF RHYTHM

IN this story I have, I think, broached a new idea in science-fiction . . . the idea of a world controlled by rhythm. Sounds, even in this world, play an important part in our lives. We know that slow music, for instance, can slow down our tempo, induce a feeling of restful calm. And we know that fast dance music can speed up our actions, induce a feeling of nervous excitement . . . as witness the jitterbugs.

Consider then, a world in which there is a strange melody, going on and on forever. Such a world might well be Saturn. A central magnetic core terminating in north and south magnetic poles, just as on Earth. And lines of force extending beyond the surface from pole to pole, again as on Earth. But Saturn has something we do not have . . . that is, rings of tiny satellites, some as large as a man's fist, some as large as an asteroid. Assuming these were of iron (and most meteors are of this mineral) they would cut the lines of force to produce innumerable variations in its flux, set up a changing magnetic field which would cause all iron on the planet, whether mined or still in the soil, to vibrate, give off sound. Sound in the form of a strange, ever-repeated tempo, dominating the lives of the inhabitants of Saturn. These inhabitants would live in time to the rhythm, move, breathe, walk in accordance with its beat. And since noise would disturb the cadence, they would be telepaths, communicating by thoughts, just as our Dr. Rhine shows thoughts can be transmitted. Though mentally advanced, they would avoid mechanical things since the noise, the rhythm, of machines would disturb their life tempo. More, Earth persons on Saturn would in time fall into the rhythm, have it become so necessary to their existence that they would fear to leave the ringed planet.

That's the basis of this newest effort from my typewriter. You will remember its hero, Martin Chance, from "The Treasure on Asteroid X." I hope you will like him as much on Saturn as you did in the asteroids.—*Frederic Arnold Kummer, Jr.*

COMING!

AN EPIDEMIC OF TRUTH

Can you imagine a city in which, on an instant's notice, no one could tell a lie? Can you picture the turmoil that sheer, naked truth would cause, if it were unfettered, loosed by some powerful means impossible to avoid? Would you yourself like to ***admit*** without your wilful consent the truth about every bit of your daily life, for just one day?

? ? ?

DAVID WRIGHT O'BRIEN

presents a powerful novelette based on this idea in our next issue. He has given a scientist the secret of an invention that gives him the power of precluding lies within a whole city. Swiftly the strange epidemic spreads over the city, and with every utterance of truth, havoc gathers a swifter pace until disaster literally threatens to engulf an entire metropolis in a holocaust of chagrin and actual danger.

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AMAZING STORIES

ON SALE DECEMBER 10

Science Quiz

The following quiz has been prepared as a pleasant means of testing your knowledge of things scientific and pseudo-scientific. We offer it solely for the pleasure it gives you and with the hope that it will provide you with many bits of information that will help you to enjoy the stories in this magazine. If you rate 50% correct in your answers, you are considerably ahead of the average. Give yourself 2 points for each correct answer.

KNOW YOUR PLANETS ? ? ?

(Fill in the blanks with the missing words and figures)

Mercury received its name because it revolves about the sun at a ———— speed than any other planet. Its sidereal period is only ———— days and its synodic period ———— days. Mercury is the ———— of the principal planets, having a diameter of only ———— miles, less than the diameters of the satellites ———— and ————. It is the ———— planet from the sun, and revolves about the sun at a mean distance of ———— miles. Mercury's rotation period is ———— days, so that, aside from librations, the planet keeps one ———— always ————. This causes great extremes in ————. According to the ———— measurements made by Pettit and Nicholson, the sunward side has a temperature of ———— degrees Fahr., which is greater than the melting point of ———— and ————. No radiation was detected from the dark side; it must be very cold there. As the velocity of escape is very ————, only ———— miles per sec., it is doubtful whether Mercury has been able to retain an ————.

SCRAMBLED WORDS

(1) An Asteroid in the Trojan group. CETHOR ————.

(2) The science of atmospheric phenomena. YELOGERMTOO ————.

(3) An alloy of copper. NOHREZ ———— ————.

(4) Prehistoric four tusked elephant. BARTEDOLETON ————.

(5) Part of the ear. PURTRIS ————.

TRUE OR FALSE

(1) The Triassic age occurred about 500 million years ago. True.... False....

(2) The two largest satellites in the Solar System are Ganymede and Callisto. True.... False ....

(3) Some of the large prehistoric reptiles developed a secondary brain in their hind-quarters. True.... False....

(4) When F is the Fahr. reading and C the Cent. reading then 9/5 (F — 32) = C. True.... False ....

(5) The Galilean telescope inverted the image. True.... False....

(6) Beaver meadows are caused by the settling of sediment, in the pond behind the beaver dam. True.... False....

(7) The orbits of the satellites of Uranus are almost perpendicular to the ecliptic. True.... False....

(8) Sea water freezes at about 29 degrees Fahr. True.... False....

(9) Sesquipedalian is an insect with 41 legs. True.... False....

(10) Before 1758 the only way to diminish chromatic aberration was to lengthen the telescope. True.... False....

(11) The outer parts of Saturn's ring revolve at a greater speed than the inner parts. True.... False....

(12) The diameter of Neptune exceeds that of Uranus by 50,000 miles. True.... False....

(13) The letter "A" is believed to be derived from a pictograph of the head of an ox. True.... False....

(14) An anticyclone has as its center an area of low pressure. True.... False....

(15) It is possible to see some of the satellites of Saturn through the two outer rings of the planet. True.... False....

STRIKE OUT THE WORD THAT DOES NOT CONFORM

(1) Ordovican, Silurian, Peroneus, Permian, Oligocene.

(2) Choroid, Cornea, Cordis, Sclerotic, Retina, Iris.

(3) Parahippus, Hippus, Merychippus, Pliohippus, Plesihippus.

(4) Mare Imbrium, Mare Nubium, Mare Nectaris, Mare Nostrum.

(5) Saponaceous, Triceratops, Diplodocus, Megalosaurus, Ichthyosaurus.

STARDUST

(1) What crater on the Moon has the longest ray system?

(2) What planet has the least density?

(3) Which satellite has the greatest orbital speed?

(4) How many asteroids are there in the Trojan Group?

(5) How many satellites has Neptune?

(See page 135 for answers)

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

This department will be conducted each month as a source of information for our readers. Address your letters to Question and Answer Department, AMAZING STORIES, 608 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

Q. At what age does the brain reach its full size and weight?—Mrs. L. G. C., Washington, D. C.

A. Although the brain usually does not grow as much in proportion to the rest of the body, since it is almost fully developed at birth, it reaches full size and weight at the same time the rest of body maturation is completed, that is, between the age of 22 and 25.

* * *

Q. What is the Brownian Movement?—J. R.

A. Robert Brown, a botanist, first observed in 1827 that when a little lycopodium (spores of the club moss) is suspended in water and examined under the microscope, the small particles appear to be in motion. Each particle moves about in a zig-zag path, vibrating with a slow trembling motion. The kinetic theory furnishes the only satisfactory explanation of this phenomenon. The movement of the suspended particles is no doubt due to molecular bombardment on the part of the water. Apparently the particles of water are in perpetual motion and are continually colliding with the particles in suspension. The movement is shown by all suspensions, such as carbon, gamboge, gold, silver, etc, provided the particles are sufficiently small.

* * *

Q. What is the difference between organic chemistry and inorganic chemistry?—N. L. C.

A. Organic chemistry deals with the compounds of but one element, carbon, which far outnumber those of any other element.

* * *

Q. What would happen to a ship traveling at the speed of light?—G. W. G.

A. According to the Lorenz-Fitzgerald contraction, a moving body shortens in the direction of its motion, thus, a ship moving at the speed of light, which is considered to be the absolute in motion, would be reduced to nothing. However, the theory of relativity accounts for the apparent annihilation of the ship. What actually happens we do not know, but to our senses, the shortening would be absolute.

* * *

Q. If according to scientists, a traveler through space would see nothing but a black void between celestial objects, why does the sky appear blue to our eyes?—Arthur Laws, Chicago, Ill.

A. Because the particles composing the atmosphere which surrounds earth act as color filters in reflecting sunlight back to our eyes. They absorb all of the color spectrum except the blue.

Q. Can a fish really remain alive after being frozen in a cake of ice, if the ice is melted naturally?—B. L. N., Houston, Texas.

A. It is perfectly possible for a fish to remain alive after being frozen in ice. There is an instance where goldfish remained alive after being frozen in a pond all winter. In Siberia there are rivers containing fish which are buried in the mud and which are frozen all winter, but are alive in the spring. Goldfish have been dipped in liquid air, frozen to brittle hardness so that they break when tapped with a hammer or dropped on the floor. Yet fish so frozen have been placed in ordinary water, and in a few moments are swimming about as vigorously as though nothing had happened.

* * *

Q. Just what is meant by absolute zero?—L. K.

A. It is theoretically the point at which all gases solidify and all molecular motion ceases, and exists at 459.6 degrees below the Fahrenheit and 273.15 degrees below the centigrade zero points. It has never been attained.

* * *

Q. When was H. G. Wells born?—Albert Kastner, Toledo, Ohio.

A. The famous author was born on September 21, 1866 at Bromley, Kent, England. He was educated at the same place in a private school and at Midhurst Grammar School, and Royal College of Science, where he won First Class Honors in Zoology. Mr. Wells' father was a shopkeeper and his mother, who had been a ladies' maid, became a housekeeper to eke out the family fortunes. His "War of the Worlds" is his most famous science fiction piece.

* * *

Q. Has an electron ever been measured?—J. L.

A. Yes. The most recent is that employed by Dr. K. T. Compton, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His measurement is by weight, and he has discovered the weight of an electron to be nine-tenths of a billion of a billionth of a billionth of a gram, or much lighter than previous estimates.

* * *

Q. How many of the known elements have been discovered in the sun?—M. C., Atlanta, Ga

A. During 1937, Dr. Charlotte E. Moore, of Princeton University, discovered iridium, osmium, and thulium in the sun, making sixty-one known solar elements thus far identified.

QUIZ ANSWERS

(Quiz on page 133)

KNOW YOUR PLANETS ? ? ?

——— greater (faster, etc.) ———
88 ——— 116 ——— smallest ———
3100 ——— Ganymede ——— Callisto ——— first ——— 36,000,000
——— 88 ——— side (hemisphere, etc.) ——— facing the Sun (turned towards the Sun, etc.) ——— temperature ———
radiometric ——— 650 ——— lead
——— tin ——— low (slight) ———
2.2 ——— atmosphere ———

SCRAMBLED WORDS

(1) HECTOR (2) METEOROLOGY (3) BRONZE (4) TETRABELODON (5) STIRRUP

TRUE OR FALSE

(1) False—it occurred about 170 million years ago.
(2) True.
(3) True.
(4) False—5/9 (F 32) C.
(5) False—the image was erect.
(6) True.
(7) True.
(8) True.
(9) False.
(10) True—some were as long as 200 feet.
(11) False—the inner parts of the rings revolve faster.
(12) False—Uranus is larger by 1000 miles.
(13) True.
(14) False—there is an area of high pressure.
(15) True—even some bright stars can be seen through the rings.

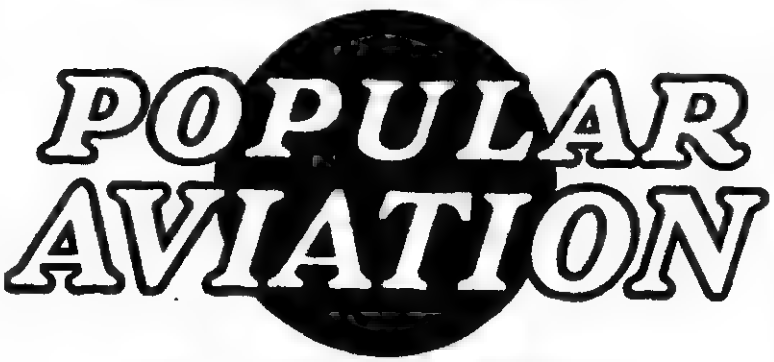
STRIKE OUT THE WORD THAT DOES NOT CONFORM

(1) Peroneus—the rest are ages of the Earth.
(2) Cordis—the rest are parts of the eye.
(3) Hippus—the rest are ancestors of the horse.
(4) Mare Nostrum—(the Mediterranean Sea as Mussolini would have it)—the rest are Lunar Seas.
(5) Saponaceous—the rest are prehistoric animals.

IS AMELIA EARHART STILL ALIVE?

. . . could she possibly be living today on some uncharted island in the Pacific Ocean? Why do reports of her "safe landing" constantly come to her husband, George Palmer Putnam? Dean Jennings, renowned author and friend of Mr. Putnam, gives a thrilling, inside account on the question the world has been asking since July 2, 1937. This authoritative, exclusive article is supplemented with authentic photographs and copies of reports sent to Mr. Putnam. Remember, it can be found only in the

DECEMBER ISSUE



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DISCUSSIONS

AMAZING STORIES will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers. Everybody is welcome to contribute. Bouquets and brick-bats will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.

TIME TRAVEL HIS MEAT

Sirs:

I select *History In Reverse* for first place. The first and foremost reason is that it is a time travelling story. They are my meat. Next I liked the unusual way it was presented. You have scooped again. This method made it seem more authentic than if it had been presented in the usual form. This way made it seem more than a story. As to the ending, it was perfect. That part about the scientists speculating over the finding of the chrome steel enhanced the reality to the very last.

Ronald Harmer

We are glad you liked this experimental story. We felt, also, when we read it, that the script form made it seem more realistic and convincing.—Ed.

WE ARE REHABILITATED

Sirs:

AMAZING has at long last improved and you may have my congratulations. But give more and more of Leo Morey and less of those hacks Krupa and Fuqua, also I would appreciate the return of the COMET-TAIL. Alec Gorey, W. T. Barnes, and Stanley Kay wouldn't be pseudonyms for Krupa and Fuqua would they?

Now for the real purpose of this letter. With the collapse of Australian Fan News and S-F Review I have started ULTRA and this mag is nearly complete. ULTRA costs 5c or 3d and consists of 16 foolscap pages, and a back (satirical) cover, and appears quarterly. In conclusion there will be a very limited supply of ULTRA. So don't delay, order your copy now. My big grouch is your ugly untrimmed edges. If you don't trim them you lose a reader (perhaps!). I have heard that you will soon publish another two magazines, one S-F and one Weird. Is that true?

Eric Russell,
(President, Amazing Rehabilitators Consolidated),
274 Edgecliff Road,
Woollahra,
Sydney, N. S. W.,
Australia.

When Eric Russell congratulates us, that's something! But be careful of your fellow fans, when you "hack" at Krupa and Fuqua! Poor Comet-Tail, too. It's our most famous relic of the "old days," but really AMAZING *has done so well with its new dress, we certainly couldn't dream of doing anything but keeping her in style. No, those pseudonyms you mention couldn't be Krupa and Fuqua, to be entirely truthful. In fact, Mr. Barnes especially resents being called Krupa. We admire your fan efforts with the new fanmag, and we wish you success with it. As for trimmed edges, and new magazines, no and yes, with a maybe thrown in. In other words, the future is still beyond reach of the time machine!—Ed.*

APPROVES OF OPERATING ON DICTATORS—IN FICTION

Sirs:

In my opinion the story "Dictator of Peace" is No. 1 because it is undoubtedly true that in this day there is a Dictator in the world with the same ideas and it would be a good thing if he had an operation also like the Gade Lasher in the story. In my opinion "Whirlpool in Space" is 2; "4-Sided Triangle" is 3, etc. I think we should have more stories like "Whirlpool in Space" and "Dictator of Peace."

Elmer O. Snell,
Battery B, 68th Field Artillery,
Fort Knox, Ky.

Even science fiction editors don't take sides, of course, but in AMAZING STORIES, *we find our authors trying to patch up the future of world history with gadgets and operations, and even if they are a bit far-fetched, we certainly wish the world's ills could be handled and cured that way.—Ed.*

DIDN'T ANTICIPATE THE ENDING

Sirs:

The "4-Sided Triangle" is the best story in the November issue because it has human interest, and the female angle is not over-worked. The climax leaves you guessing and for once I did not anticipate such an ending.

Bill Davy,
449—7th St., E.,
Prince Albert, Sask, Can.

No doubt Author Temple will be pleased to hear his story found favor, and that his ending kept you guessing. We're pleased ourselves. It's a good sign of merit in a short story.—Ed.

DOESN'T LIKE SERIALS

Sirs:

Well, well, well, and well. You put a story like "The Hidden Universe" in your magazine and didn't finish it. A fine thing. Don't tell me you have to resort to serials to sell the next issue? Keep those ding-dong serials out, won'tcha? There are certain S-F mags on the market that I look on

with disdain because they contain serials. And besides, when I get into a S-F story I don't eat, sleep or go to church until I finish it. Do you mean to tell me that I have to wait a whole month before I can once again go to church? Again I say, a fine thing.

Boy, I'm going round and round trying to figure out which story was best, except for "Missing: Millions in Radium". I consider it an "also ran" story.

By the way, I think I have a solution for Bill Williams' problem in "4-Sided Triangle." Why didn't he shut his contraption off a few seconds before the second Joan Leeton was "done"? Then she wouldn't be entirely like the original Joan. Or am I boring you? Or maybe I'm "off my nut."

Say, if AMAZING wasn't in "cahoots" with FANTASTIC, the former would be having a tough fight.

Geo. Hrebec,
2904 Pearl St.,
Austin, Tex.

We're surprised. Farley's serial has been getting so much commendation that we'd begun to think we'd struck a bonanza. Then you come along and tell us we're keeping you from your meals. Now, could that be because you like the yarn so much? I rather think so, and we chuckle. At least you will be with us next month. But really, we are giving you serials because the readers have been demanding them. That, believe us, is the only reason. As for your solution to the 4-sided triangle, we're afraid shutting off the machine might have left Doll Leeton uncompleted, and maybe that wouldn't have been so comfortable, or healthy, for her! AMAZING isn't in cahoots with Fantastic. Both magazines have separate and distinct reputations. Both run a different type of science fiction. Haven't you noticed how strong the adventure angle is in Fantastic? AMAZING has a rather different policy. But we've glad you like them both.—Ed.

HE KICKS—HIMSELF!

Sirs:

"The Hidden Universe" by Ralph Milne Farley is a story that one can hardly wait to finish, not read just to be reading, and after you have finished it you kick yourself because you have hurried through it and then you read it again. The author deserves to be ranked with the best for this story alone. It's got everything. AMAZING's new policy should be *More By Farley*. Two for every issue if possible.

Thank you,
Russell Gale,
Box 222, Leedey, Okla.

ANY SORT OF CRITICISM?

Sirs:

It certainly is strange how I can hardly praise the mag and still criticize it severely. Back cover was stupendous. Something lacking in most of the stories. You can expect any sort of criticism from me. The story is either excellent, good, fair or poor. Strictly on the level. No use saying a

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certain thing about a certain issue when one has other ideas about it. Ten of the last 15 were tops, believe you me.

How about adopting the percentage idea in your story rating, letting the person mark so much percentage for it according to how much he went for it? A person might rate the best story 75%, which would give you a clear idea how big the story went over with that certain individual; while still another might mark the story with a (1), still not like it, but at the same time give you the idea that he liked it. This way you know just how much we like certain stories.

Romeo Fascione,
3826 E. 144th St.,
Cincinnati, Ohio

P. S.—I hope I don't annoy you with all this writing every month.

You certainly don't annoy us. And that idea about percentage rating isn't bad. We'll see about it in a future issue. We certainly want to know just how the reader "goes" for a story. Because that's the only way we can give him more of the same. We feel highly complimented to know you consider 10 out of the last 15 yarns as tops. That's really a percentage!—Ed.

BACK ISSUES

Sirs:

I have all of the issues of your magazine since Oct. 1938, excepting the Jan. issue, which I missed because of no fault of my own, for AMAZING STORIES is my favorite magazine. I would like some information on back issues. I am sure there are others who would want to know of this, too. Please tell us something about it in Discussions.

Here is how I think the stories in the Nov. issue rank: First is "Whirlpool in Space," a first class interplanetary yarn. I would like to see more of this kind of story. A close second is "The 4-Sided Triangle." It is well written, has a fine plot, and the human interest in it especially good. There is one thing that keeps it out of first place; atomic duplication is not totally unheard of. "Wives in Duplicate" had the same idea. This story was published by you in the Oct. issue. However, it's still a good yarn. Next is "Legion of the Dead," an exceptionally fine tale of horror. Just the kind of a bedtime story for little sister. A human robot controlled by any other means than hypnotism is new. Originality counts. "Dictator of Peace" was just fair. Too many yarns of keeping peace by harming the dictator in some way. Poor little dictator. "Missing: Millions in Radium" sounded like a story from the pages of some dime mag. A good detective story is O.K. but that was PUNK.

Like your covers swell. Keep up the good work.

Yours truly,

Jim Stucker,
Fredericksburg, Ind.

Back issues of AMAZING, *from June 1938 to date can be had from the circulation department. Any prior to that can be obtained only by inserting a notice in the correspondence corner, where fans occasionally offer back copies for sale.—Ed.*

WHY AMAZING LEADS

Sirs:

I can certainly understand why your circulation figures increase. Your stories and departments are increasing constantly in quality and interest.

The two outstanding stories in October's AMAZING are: "The Priestess Who Rebelled" and "Return of Satan." Both are definitely off-trail stories. I like practically any "off-trail" story but these two are well written and interesting as well.

In "The Missing Year" the action of the characters in the first chapter is implausible but the plot is new and unique. I liked it very much, but why shouldn't I? I have just finished a story using practically the same plot. I'm a firm believer in mental telepathy. It seems as though every time I think up a really worthwhile plot for a story some other writer comes out with a story that is practically its duplicate. Maybe I should wear a force-screen around my head as a sort of fence to keep in my thoughts.

"History in Reverse" was a good story and unlike most plays I've read, it wasn't confusing. "The Ice Plague" and "Judson's Annihilator" were also good stories. This was a six star issue. Every story was worth reading twice.

Liked your cover too. The figures are strong and dramatic. I always read "The Observatory" carefully. You hand us out some excellent ideas for plots for more stories. Keep up the high standard and your circulation figures will without a doubt continue to rise.

F. E. Hardart,
P. O. Box 1088,
Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

We've had many authors remark of instances like yours, of stories being written by someone else, in a coincidental manner. Telepathy? Maybe. After all, we believe in science fiction!—Ed.

COVERS

Sirs:

Farley's yarn is better than his usual line (though he isn't bad) and I am eagerly looking forward to the next installment.

This month's idea for the cover was almost excellent. It's a relief to see a magazine in this field omit a "Radium Gunfight" or a rocket pistol blasting away. As usual though, you use too much story advertising on the cover. It almost spoils the appearance altogether. Personally, I think you are afraid to let Paul do a cover because you don't want to spoil a masterpiece with a lot of unnecessary front page printing—your daily newspaper is the place for that print. Speaking of Paul, now that we have him on the rear cover of your companion magazine, how about a few front covers as you promised us, eh?

Harold G. Schaeffer,
1320 Fulton Ave.,
New York, N. Y.

Glad you liked our cover. We are trying to be distinctive with them. And you WILL see Paul on a front cover eventually. We promise again. —Ed.

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THANKS FOR ADAM LINK

Sirs:

I must thank you for publishing my letter in the August number, for I have received over a dozen replies. I must also (heartily) thank you for publishing "The Trial of Adam Link, Robot," which was as fine as its base, "I, Robot." Binder is a great writer.

I would like you to inform me if overseas readers can enter your cover competitions. You see the magazine reaches us too late to send in our stories in time. How about a closing date of one month later than the usual one for all overseas readers?

I remain an enthusiastic reader,

Vol Molesworth,
11 Northumberland Street,
Clovelly, Sydney,
New South Wales, Australia.

You've given us an idea about cover contests, and we'll have more to say about that in a future issue. We certainly want our foreign readers to get a chance in these cover contests. So keep your eyes peeled.—Ed.

THE ONLY WORD . . .

Sirs:

Perfect is the only word for your September cover. At last you seem to grasp the idea that the majority of readers do not want covers that make children cry, and horrify friends. It is one of the few front covers that I was not ashamed to show.

The stories are getting to be monotonously good. If you don't soon print a rotten story for the fans to kick about, or an exceptionally good story for the fans to rave about, I am afraid that every illustration will be gone over with a microscope. That the Aristocrat of Science Fiction has rough edges, while that "pseudo science-fiction" magazine *Fantastic Adventures* has trimmed edges, is a disgrace. Remedy this as soon as possible. Keep up the good work on the covers.

Fred Hurter,
Red Rock, Ontario, Canada.

How about our December and the current cover? We think these two are good enough to rank above your favorite September cover. What do you say? And we don't intend to print a rotten story. Not while we pride ourselves on being fairly competent editors.—Ed.

NEW FAN MAG

Sirs:

To the ordinary reader the fan magazine means very little, and yet, if the reader is a true fantasy follower, it should be a very important item. In this great field of literature which we all are interested in, there are two distinct factions, that of the active fan group, and that of the passive fan group. There must be some way in which these two factions can find a common bond!

Doubtless, many readers are as yet unaware of the existence of Science-Fiction's only printed, semi-professional-fan magazine. The purpose of this new publication is to bind these two fantasy factions together. We want you! We want to stimulate your interest actively in the great field

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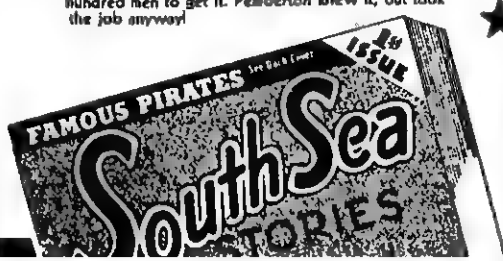
★ **THE STRANGE TREASURE OF AH MUN**—What priceless treasure was it that Ah Mun wanted salvaged? Pierre Fournier would kill a hundred men to get it. Pemberton knew it, but took the job anyway!

★ **BLOOD WILL TELL**—All hell broke loose on the island of Avulla when the white and native girl fought for the love of handsome young Allen!

★ **TWO MEN AND A GIRL**—Donald Campbell considered Aleuha as his native wife . . . but he didn't realize his wife believed in bigamy!

★ **THE END OF KING PENNY**—King Penny deserved the horrible vengeance of the tribe for his crime against the chief's daughter.



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of fantasy literature!

Many of our more prominent editors, authors, etc., have derived their interest, and success, in fantasy from just such a venture. The editor of AMAZING, for instance, was once a very important figure in the semi-pro fan publications. This is to illustrate the purpose of "STARDUST." We want the readers of the pro magazines to join hands with the active fans in science-fiction! We want all of you to be in Chicago next year for the great 1940 WORLD'S SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION. And you can best keep in touch with these events by joining the ranks of STARDUST, where you will be minutely informed of all the details. Come on, fans, BOOST SCIENCE FICTION! The first issue of this gala, slick paper, printed, large size fan mag is due early in November. You may secure your first copy by simply writing "STARDUST" the magazine UNIQUE, 2609 Argyle St., Chicago, Illinois, and enclosing 20c subscription price for single copy. BOOST SCIENCE FICTION! ON TO THE 1940 WORLD'S SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION IN CHICAGO!! . . .

Looks like the fans and fan mags are rallying around the 1940 convention in great style. We think these fan mags are an excellent medium for accomplishing things in the fan field. Keep it up, boys.—Ed.

CORRESPONDENCE CORNER

J. L. Chapman, 1521 Como Ave., S.E., Minneapolis, Minn., has for sale AS and other SF magazines, annual sets or singles from 1933 to date; all are in perfect condition, cheap. . . . Broox Sledge, 214 Glade, New Albany, Miss., wants back issues of AS 1937 to March 1939. . . . George E. Stewart, 708 E. Cervantes St., Pensacola, Fla., wants to correspond with other students of Esperanto both in U.S. and foreign countries. . . . Abraham Oshinsky is forming an astronomy club in New York City and wants to hear from those interested. . . . L. Lee, 2011 Spencer St., Philadelphia, Pa., will trade unused U.S. stamps and SF magazines 1926 to 1937 for copies of fan magazines, pamphlets, books, drawing, etc. . . . J. S. Avery, 55 Middle St., Skowhegan, Me., wants to hear from those interested in joining the Maine Scientifiction Association. . . . Mrs. Howard Beasley, Lyndon, Kan., wants to correspond with any and all fantasy and SF fans. . . .

READERS!

Take advantage of AMAZING STORIES' discussions column and of the correspondence corner, to air your views on science fiction and to gain pen pals, or trade back issues, or offer to buy or sell them. These departments are your departments, and you are free to use them in a friendly fashion. Your editor is just "one of the gang" and he'll be glad to take part. However, personal letters cannot be answered, unless the matter is of pertinent interest to all readers.

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★ **WINGS ABOVE WARSAW**—Carradine wasn't going to let a Dictator's bluff keep him from flying back to England! No sir!

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28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35
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31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35
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29x6.50-19	3.30	1.40
30x6.50-20	3.30	1.45
6.00-17	3.40	1.40
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.40
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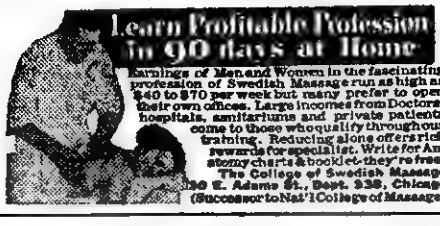

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SUSPENDED ANIMATION

By HENRY GADE

(SEE BACK COVER PAINTING BY PAUL MAXWELL)

Suspended animation has long been a subject of science fiction stories, and more recently has been partially achieved in experiment

H. G. WELLS, was one of the earlier writers of science fiction who wrote of suspended animation. His famous story, "When The Sleeper Wakes," which many readers may remember as having appeared in AMAZING STORIES years ago, dealt with a man who slept in suspended animation for centuries, and awoke in a world of the future, where strange science made it a world of wonders.

This has long been a favorite theme, and many stories have been written, using suspended animation as a means of taking characters to the future.

Some of the advantages that are to be seen in suspended animation are not only those of the science fiction writers, who use it as a means of visiting the future, sleeping through an era of strife and war, etc., but the more practical ones of medicine and health.

Recently, at an annual American Medical Association meeting in St. Louis, a movie was shown of an experiment in suspending animation in a human being. The methods used were extremely primitive, and were conducted on women cancer sufferers.

Cracked ice was used, closely packed around the patients, and for five days they lay in a motionless state. Pulse beats were reduced to an imperceptible rate, digestion was halted, kidney functions were completely stopped. The metabolism rate was reduced from 10 to 20%. An internal body temperature of 89 degrees was reached and maintained without harm to the patient. In one instance, the body temperature was reduced still further, to 82 degrees, but this was not maintained for any appreciable length of time.

The result of this experiment was found to be beneficial, since the patients were improved. The normal healthy cells were not impaired in their function, and restored themselves, while cancer cells were held in virtual hibernation, and were kept from growing.

The experiment was carried on by Drs. Temple Fay and Lawrence W. Smith, in Philadelphia. Since then doctors have been anxious to try the treatment on other diseases, such as heart disease, tuberculosis, and infectious diseases of various sorts. There have been several "repeat" treatments on cancer patients.

On our back cover this month we have carried forward this initial beginning of suspended animation, to what we believe will be the ultimate advancement of this new medical science.

The sanitarium of the future may be a hospital of not beds, but refrigerators, in which patients will sleep in suspended animation at low body temperature for weeks, months, at a time, until their condition is entirely cured, without any apparent passage of time insofar as they themselves are concerned.

A patient who has tuberculosis, will, upon discovery that he or she has the disease, immediately go to this refrigerator sanitarium and be placed in a state of "hibernation" during which complete rest, which actually is the only known effective cure for the disease, may be achieved. The diseased cells will cease their activity, and die out, while the normal healthy cells will grow on, replacing the dying tuberculosis tissue. In a few months, the patient can be revived, and return to health completed by a process of recuperation and general building up.

However, in all possibility, this will not be the only use to which suspended animation will be put. It is quite possible, that bodily functions can be entirely halted, and a state of near-death achieved, so that patients may sleep for years in a dormant, non-functioning state, to be revived without having aged during the passage of time.

When this happens, H. G. Wells' story will come true, and living persons may choose to desert their own era, and go into a state of almost-death, to wait for another era of life. Persons who are tired of their present environment, bored with life today, may choose to take a chance on what a future life has to offer.

It would even be possible to invest a sum of money, then sleep in suspended animation, to awake with a comfortable amount of security, enabling the investor to live out the balance of his natural life in retirement, without financial worry.

It may also be assumed that persons desiring a re-balancing of age differences might take advantage of the suspended animation machine. Truly, it is a fascinating scientific possibility.

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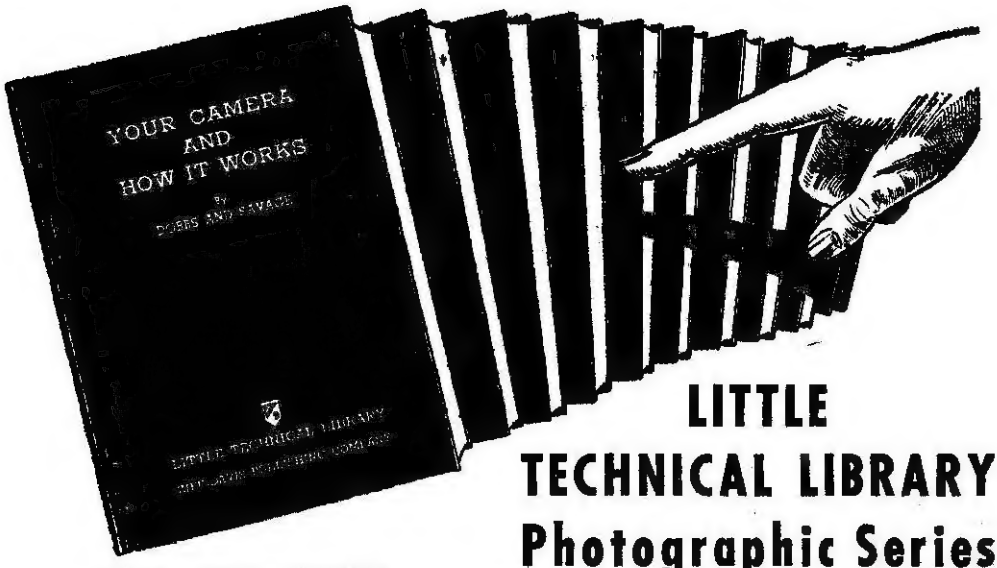

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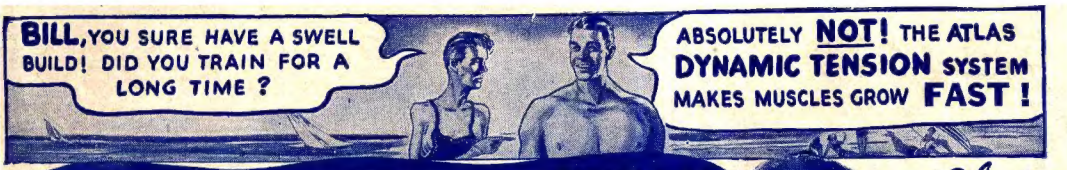
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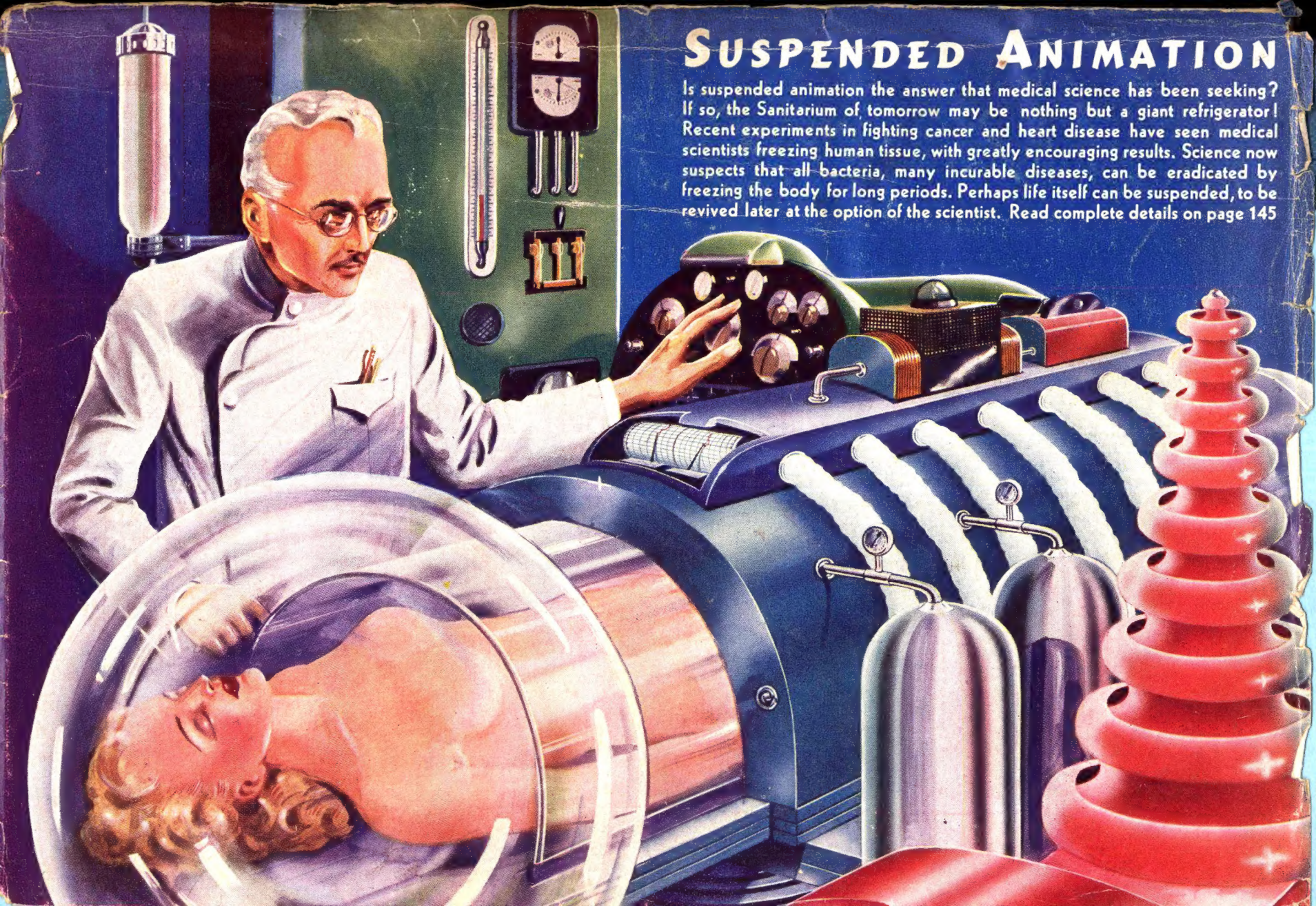

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